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# *Connections*



## *Resource Guide*

### *Enhanced Community Service and Strategies for Keeping Kids in School*

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### *Enhanced Community Service and Strategies for Keeping Kids in School*

Written by Dee Lindenberger/SAPE

This Resource Guide is part of a collaborative project between:

Michigan Department of Education

O'Neill Consulting

Michigan Strategic Alternatives in Prevention Education (SAPE) Association

Calhoun Intermediate School District

Macomb Intermediate School District

Eaton Intermediate School District

Marquette-Alger Regional Educational Service Agency

Kent Intermediate School District

Wayne Regional Educational Service Agency



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*These materials were developed with federal funds allocated by  
the Michigan Department of Education and the U.S. Department of Education.*

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# Connections Resource Guide

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## Introduction

### What Is SAPE?

SAPE, is an acronym for Strategic Alternatives in Prevention Education. Created by an act of the Michigan State Legislature in 1971 under the name “Substance Abuse Prevention Education,” SAPE provides outstanding leadership in Michigan and the U.S. by developing research-based programs related to substance abuse prevention, violence and bullying prevention, neuroscience-based learning, organizational change, student assistance/crisis response programs, and suspension and expulsion.

Numerous SAPE initiatives have been recognized as programs of excellence on the state and national levels, including formal recognition by the Michigan Association of School Boards, the Center for Substance Abuse Treatment, the National Rural Institute on Alcohol and Drug Abuse, the U.S. Department of Health and Human Services, and the Centers for Disease Control. SAPE is Michigan’s most experienced network of professionals working together with youth, educators, parents, and community members to prevent high risk behaviors through positive youth development. SAPE consultants are located at the following sites in Michigan:

#### **Calhoun Intermediate School District**

Guy Golomb (269) 781-5141

#### **Eaton Intermediate School District**

Charlotte Koger (517) 543-5500 x. 1161

Sarah Lurie (517) 543-5500 x. 1111

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#### **Kent Intermediate School District**

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#### **Macomb Intermediate School District**

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#### **Marquette-Alger Regional Educational Service Agency**

Dee Lindenberger (906) 226-5122

#### **Wayne Regional Educational Service Agency**

Kathy Gibson (734) 334-1608



### SAPE's Mission

The mission of SAPE is to promote the development of healthy, resilient children, schools, and communities through asset-building and collaborative partnerships that form a *circle of support* for our youth.



## Acknowledgments

This guidebook represents the cumulative wisdom and experience of the members of the Michigan SAPE Association. I would like to acknowledge my appreciation for their help in conceptualizing the ideas and strategies for this Resource Guide. While the development of this book was completed with the support of *all* the SAPE consultants, I would like to recognize the extraordinary amount of time and help provided by two people: Kathy Gibson and Étienne Senker.

**Kathy Gibson** is an outstanding editor! She spent an enormous amount of time (often at home at night!) reading and rereading drafts—and provided *many* suggestions that helped to make this a better document. (I don't call her “Eagle Eye” for no reason!)

**Étienne Senker** (“Senker”) is also an editor and proof reader extraordinaire! He's the one who found the missing commas, extra spaces, inconsistencies in style, and “orphaned words” that sometimes get left behind after sentences get moved around. (His nickname is “Hawk Eye.”) He also formatted the citations and reference pages—a time-consuming, exacting, and thankless job!

In addition, I'd like to thank **Merrilee Keller** and Pathways Substance Abuse Services for supporting a portion of my time with this project. Merrilee is one of Michigan's “fiercest advocates” for youth and is always willing to do whatever it takes to provide the best services and education for young people.

A huge thank you goes to **Jim O'Neill**, our project evaluator, for his collaboration on the *Connections Effective Schools Survey*. Jim has been formally adopted as a “SAPE Deputy”! None of us in SAPE could imagine a more competent or enjoyable project evaluator to have on our team.

Other people who helped with editing and proofing were **Martie Manty**, a talented Prevention Consultant whom Michigan recently lost to Vermont; and **Larry Boburka**, a gifted counselor at Westwood High School.

Last, but definitely not least, “thank you” to my daughter **Heather**, my “adopted son” **Will Manty**, and *Senker* for supporting things on the home front during long hours in the office.

# Overview to Connections



## Resource Guide

### *Enhanced Community Service and Strategies for Keeping Kids in School*

#### **Key Question: What's the purpose of this Resource Guide?**

*Having hope is an essential part of one's social, emotional, and spiritual sustenance. It gives us strength to live and continually move forward, even when conditions seem hopeless.*

*Blanstein and Guetzloe, 2000*

The *Connections Resource Guide: Enhanced Community Service and Strategies for Keeping Kids in School* is a “work in progress” that is funded by the Michigan Department of Education in accordance with Title IV No Child Left Behind. Its purpose is to support the efforts of school/community teams that are recipients of Community Service Grants, as well as anyone else looking for ways to keep kids connected to school. But, that's not its *real* purpose.

Its real purpose is to provide *hope*—hope for the students who are at risk of, or have been, suspended or expelled from school, *and* hope for the educators and community members who work with them. Students who are confronted with repeated suspensions or expulsion are often in such deep trouble in one or more areas of their lives that they are “disconnected” from school, from the people in their school, and from learning. They often have little hope that things will get better. When hope is lost, so too is a student's motivation and will to “continually move forward”—to make the behavioral, social, or academic changes that are needed in order for them to be successful in school and in life. Suspended and expelled students need to believe that things can be better. They need to believe there's *a way back* for them—a way to connect with school, the people in their school, and with learning.

*Suspended and expelled students need to believe that things can be better. They need to believe there's a way back for them—a way to connect with school, the people in their school, and with learning.*

Suspension and expulsion should be the last resorts educators use as strategies to motivate students to change their behavior. As educators, our hope for change tends to wane with each suspension a student serves, and is gone by the time a student is expelled. Expulsion represents the end of the line for a student's relationship with us and symbolizes to them the end of our belief that they can change.


At a point in time when students have little or no hope for their future as successful learners in school, we can share *our* belief that they are capable of making the necessary changes in their lives. Numerous longitudinal studies in resiliency have demonstrated the enormous impact that a caring relationship with an adult can have on a child—a relationship that instills a “sense of the possible” and the belief that the child can overcome obstacles. However, we can't give what we don't have, and so it is imperative, if we are to make a difference in the lives of

suspended and expelled students, that 1) we nurture within ourselves a steadfast sense of “the possible” for even our most challenging students, and 2) we have access to a broad repertoire of effective strategies that reach and teach students with problem behaviors, rather than just punish them.

Thus, the real purpose of this Resource Guide is to provide educators and community members with the *tools of hope*: a framework of understanding issues related to suspensions and expulsions, and a repertoire of research-based strategies and resources that will enable them to work effectively with at-risk students—while inspiring in them a “sense of the possible.” Otherwise, why bother?

Following is an overview of the Resource Guide. It includes a “key question” that each section is designed to answer and a brief description of the content of the section:


## **I. CHARACTERISTICS AND FACTORS RELATED TO SUSPENDED AND EXPELLED STUDENTS**

 **Key Question:** *What characteristics and factors determine a student’s level of risk for suspension and expulsion?*

There’s a dynamic range of *risk and protective factors* at play that will make students more or less vulnerable to engaging in problem behaviors that are related to suspension and expulsion. When we have an understanding of the ways in which characteristics of the individual, family, school, and community interact and influence each other, we will have a wider lens through which to view students’ problem behaviors. When we see a larger picture, we can better understand the function and intent of maladaptive behaviors. This allows us to make more informed choices about how to help students make changes that will help them meet their needs in a more pro-social way and become successful learners. Consequently, this section is devoted to building a framework of understanding regarding the characteristics and risk/protective factors in the following domains that play determining roles in student suspension and expulsion:


- A. Family Domain
- B. Individual Domain
- C. School Domain
- D. Community Domain

## **II. SUSPENSION AND EXPULSION: THE INTENT AND THE REALITY**

 **Key Question:** *What is the intent of suspension and expulsion, and what is the reality of their impact on students?*

This section focuses on the research regarding the overall effectiveness and impact of suspension and expulsion as a means of improving students’ behavior and creating safer learning environments.

### III. FROM RESEARCH TO PRACTICE: STRATEGIES FOR MAKING CONNECTIONS

 **Key Question:** *How can we help suspended and expelled students connect to their schools, the people in their schools, to learning, to their communities, and to themselves?*

A. Structured Community Domain Strategies

B. Effective School Domain Strategies

#### *Structured Community Domain Strategies*

Community service is a means of providing ongoing structure and learning for students who are suspended or expelled. This section will present strategies that can help ensure successful implementation of community service projects for suspended and expelled students. There are a variety of transition services and resources that can help maximize the effectiveness of a student's community service experience, including procedures for the following: 1) selection of a compatible placement, 2) support for academics and their community service work (including use of mentors) while serving their suspension or expulsion, 3) facilitation of a reflection process that helps students learn from their experience and plan for needed behavioral and academic changes, and 4) connections to needed support services upon re-entry into school.


#### *Effective School Domain Strategies*

The learning and successful connections made through students' participation in a positive community service experience during suspension or expulsion can be enhanced when they return to a supportive and engaging school environment. The intent of the school-based strategies is to increase the chances of a successful reintegration into school following suspension or expulsion. A range of research-based strategies are presented that will help students make changes that will enable them to be successful learners, and inspire hope for both adults and students.

*The findings suggest that families, schools, churches, businesses, government, media, and other segments within the community must work together to address common concerns, share resources, and create a better world for our young people.*

*Benson, 1997*

### IV. PLANNING AND IMPLEMENTATION: THE CHANGE PROCESS

 **Key Question:** *How do we motivate and maintain a systems change that will prevent suspensions and expulsions and promote student success for all?*

Good intentions and a collection of specific strategies aren't enough. When looking for an effective strategy to prevent problem behaviors that lead to suspensions and expulsions, a growing body of research supports an approach that is systemic. Based upon the work of pioneers in the field of organizational change such as Peter Senge and Michael Fullan, this section will offer some strategies for initiating and maintaining an effective change process.

## V. RESOURCES




### **Key Question: *What resources are available?***

This section provides a variety of resources to assist you in your continued learning, planning, and implementation of strategies.

- A. Annotated Bibliography of Research Articles and Books
- B. Community Service Grant Contact Information:
  - 1) SAPE Technical Support Consultants
  - 2) Michigan Department of Education Project Director
  - 3) Project Evaluator
- C. Assessment and Planning Tools

## I. CHARACTERISTICS AND FACTORS RELATED TO SUSPENDED AND EXPELLED STUDENTS

 **Key Question:** *What characteristics and factors determine a student's level of risk for suspension and expulsion?*

*Who are the students involved in [suspension] and expulsion? Through the examination of the characteristics of these students, [and the environments in which they live], we may come to understand the reasons for their misbehavior and the paths that bring them, over time, to commit serious school rule violations.*

*G. Morrison, Anthony, Storino,  
Cheng, Furlong, and R. Morrison, 2001*

### Introduction to Risk and Protective Factors

“Risk factors” are characteristics or conditions that have been scientifically linked to an increase in a student’s level of risk for problem behaviors (e.g., chemical use, aggression/violence, vandalism, truancy, academic failure). Those that decrease a student’s vulnerability are “protective factors.” Literally hundreds of cross cultural, longitudinal studies spanning as long as fifty years have demonstrated the powerful effect these factors can have in buffering the negative impact of adversity (Werner, 1989; Rutter, 1985). The research of Emmy Werner remains the seminal work regarding the capacity for people to “spring back” from severe stress and trauma as a result of protective factors. This capacity to “successfully adapt in the face of adversity” and go on to “develop social, academic, and vocational competence...” is known as resiliency (Henderson, 1996).

It is important to remember in our dealing with students that they possess both risk and protective factors, and because of that, there is no *one* factor that can predict problem behaviors that are related to suspension and expulsion. Rather, there are a number of relevant characteristics in the *individual* and *environmental* domains of a student’s life that are continually interacting. Ultimately, it is the *balance* of risk and protective factors that determines a student’s level of risk at any point in time.

*Family background, personal characteristics of the child, the school context and the social behavior of children interact to create conditions that place children at risk of failing to achieve their academic potential, dropping out of school, and/or having limits placed on their ability to function as productive adults in society.*

*Boyd, 1993*

The number and intensity of risk and protective factors in a student’s life can shift with changing circumstances—a divorce in the family, death of a friend, rejection or harassment by peers. Simply making the transition from middle

*No one is invulnerable;  
every person has a  
“threshold” beyond which  
he or she can “succumb.”*

*Benard, 1992  
citing Rutter, 1979*

to high school tends to be a time of increased risk for students, a reality that is reflected by the fact that 14 is the most common age for expulsions in Michigan schools (Student Advocacy Center of Michigan, 2002). “No one is invulnerable; every person has a ‘threshold’ beyond which he or she can ‘succumb’” (Benard, 1992 citing Rutter, 1979).

A note of caution regarding *risk factors*: We need to be able to identify students who are at increased risk and provide them with support. However, there is an inherent danger of an identified risk factor becoming a “label.” When a student has a label, it tends to negatively skew how we view them and limits our ability to see their strengths and potential. Labeling a student is, in effect, an additional risk factor. So, while we will discuss risk factors that are related to suspension and expulsion, bear in mind that the purpose is to provide a *context for understanding* problem behaviors and to help *identify appropriate support services*. Our task is to *counterbalance* identified risk factors, “either by decreasing the exposure to risk factors and stressful life events, or by increasing the number of available protective factors...in the lives of vulnerable children” (Werner, 1990).

Just as there is no one characteristic that can predict problem behaviors, there is no single profile of risk factors for students who are suspended or expelled. This is due, in part, to the fact that there is a wide range of infractions that can result in suspension or expulsion (e.g., truancy; disobedience; reckless driving on campus; profanity; alcohol, tobacco, or other drug use; fighting or assaults; verbal threats; weapons). There are, however, some reoccurring environmental and individual characteristics among students engaged in problem behaviors. The characteristics and factors of the various domains (Family, Individual, School, and Community) described below are particularly relevant to students who have *multiple infractions* as opposed to those who have a one-time offense that is atypical of their normal behavior.

*Antisocial behavior is the “recurrent violations of socially prescribed patterns of behavior”*

*Simcha-Fagan, et al.*  
1975

Antisocial behavior is one of the reoccurring characteristics that is related to suspension and expulsion. It is defined as “recurrent violations of socially prescribed patterns of behavior” (Simcha-Fagan, et al. 1975). Antisocial behaviors include a broad spectrum of behaviors, ranging from physical violence and entrenched patterns of opposition to minor forms of disrespect and disobedience.

*[Antisocial behavior] is characterized by forms of hostility, including “aggression, a willingness to commit rule infractions, defiance of adult authority, and violation of the social norms of society....In a very real sense, antisocial behavior is about aggression. Aggressive behavior can be expressed in physical, gestural, and verbal forms...” (Walker, 1995). [It is also characterized by] being unruly, stealing, or lying...*

*Mcevoy & Welker, 2000*



Based upon a review of state and national literature, that definition of antisocial behavior is relevant to the majority of behaviors that result in suspension or expulsion, particularly of those students who have multiple infractions (Michigan Public Policy Initiative, 2003; Skiba & Reece, 1999).

## **Characteristics and Risk/Protective Factors in Domains**

There are four “domains” in a student’s life that play a role in determining a student’s risk for behaviors related to suspension and expulsion:

- A. Family Domain
- B. Individual Domain
- C. School Domain
- D. Community Domain

Characteristics and risk/protective factors in each of those domains will be presented, along with a “causal model” that illustrates how the interplay of cumulative risk factors across domains is part of a predictable path of escalating antisocial behaviors. In addition to the protective factors and suggestions provided within each of the domain sections, a comprehensive list of strategies that serve as countervailing forces” will be provided in Section III (*From Research to Practice: Strategies for Making Connections*).



## A. Family Domain: Characteristics and Factors

*Thus the path to delinquency, criminality, and ultimately prison begins for many individuals very early in their lives. It starts with the early acquisition of an antisocial behavior pattern within the home and family that is often well developed prior to entering school....This is a highly predictable path...*

Walker, Colvin, and Ramsey, 1995

*Repeated office referrals are associated...with higher levels of family conflict.*

Morrison, et al. 2001

### Families, Stress, and Antisocial Behavior

While antisocial behavior can be the result of physical or neurological injury, such as brain trauma, there is a substantial amount of research showing a consistent association with family dysfunction and pathology (Rutter, Giller, and Hagell, 1998; Walker, et al. 1995; Patterson, Reid, and Dishion, 1992; Olweus, 1993). Families can be “aggression-generating systems” that in effect *teach* and promote antisocial behavior among their members (Olweus, 1993). It is important to understand the characteristics of these families for two reasons:

- 1) it will prepare us to work more effectively with both the students and parents in those families, and
- 2) the same characteristics that exemplify “aggression-generating” family systems apply to schools. Schools can be aggression-generating systems as well.

Antisocial behavior is the “single best predictor of delinquency in adolescence” (Walker, 1995)—and along with delinquent behavior comes suspension and expulsion. This is supported by the fact that the majority of *expulsions* in Michigan are the result of aggressive behavior: 38% for physical assaults/fighting, 16% for infractions involving weapons, 15% for verbal assaults, 4% for bomb threats, and 1% each for vandalism, arson, and theft (Michigan Public Policy Initiative, 2003).

Walker and his colleagues conducted a longitudinal study that followed two cohorts of fourth-grade boys. One group scored high on scales of aggression and antisocial behavior; the other group scored low and was considered to be “at minimal risk” for such behaviors. Students having high scores on scales of aggression and antisocial behavior at fourth grade had a dropout rate of 62% compared to 12% in the control group (1995). Established patterns of antisocial behavior can even be accurately identified by 3 or 4 years of age.

What do we know about family systems that predictably produce children who can be identified as “antisocial” by such an early age? There are a number of factors that can create a chronic state of stress and dysfunction in families.

Following are five major stressors that can trigger dysfunction:

1) Criminal Activity of Parents

Children whose parents have criminal records have a greater chance of delinquency and criminal activity themselves. A longitudinal study of 350 children found that 37% of boys having fathers with a criminal record became delinquent by the age of 18 compared to 8% of boys whose fathers had no criminal record (Walker, et al. 1995).

2) Substance Abusing Parents

Parents with drug and alcohol problems pass on a harsh legacy for their children. The abuse (physical, sexual, or emotional), neglect, and general family dysfunction that are related to parental substance abuse have long been documented in the literature. They are reflected in a wide range of children's problem behaviors, including higher rates of juvenile delinquency, mental illness, suicide, and teenage marriages (Wegscheider, 1981). Each of these behaviors increases the likelihood of school failure by dropping out, suspension, or expulsion.

*The evidence demonstrating that a school can serve as a "protective shield to help children withstand the multiple vicissitudes that they can expect of a stressful world" abounds, whether it is coming from a family environment devastated by alcoholism or mental illness or from a poverty-stricken community environment, or both (Garmezy, 1991).*

*Benard, 1992*

3) Teenage Parents

Children of teenage parents are at elevated risk for antisocial behavior and related school problems as they grow up, as a result of stressors their young parents are likely to encounter (e.g., curtailed education, poverty, being on welfare, lack of support from a partner, and lack of adequate coping and parenting skills). The child's risk is particularly high if the teen mother was under the age of eighteen at the time of their birth. Another consideration regarding teenage parents is the potential for the single mother (or father) to be involved in relationships with a number of different partners. The disruptions and inconsistency that are part of repeated separations or changes in caregivers are substantial risk factors for antisocial behavior. The Dunedin study identified it as the "strongest of all family predictors" (Henry, et al. 1993). The same cycle of repeated separations and changes in caregivers can occur with divorce and broken homes, and will have a similar impact on the children.

4) Poverty

Delinquency is associated with social disadvantage and poverty (Bolger, et al. 1995). A study by Nichols (1999) indicates this is particularly true of African Americans: "...individual poverty impacts African Americans but not European Americans." A longitudinal study of 378 families looked at the effects of economic stress on family members. The findings indicate that the effect on antisocial behavior is *indirectly* related to poverty. In other words, it's not "poverty" per se that is related to antisocial behavior; it is the risk factors that can result from poverty, such as "parental depression, marital conflict, and parental

*Students carry the stress that they may be feeling at home to the school context, where their distress is reflected through misbehavior.*

*Morrison, et al. 2001*

hostility” (Rutter and Giller, 1983). Michigan students who have been expelled are almost 2.5 times as likely as the general student population to be living at less than 100% of the federal poverty level (Michigan Public Policy Initiative, 2003).

It is interesting to note that while socioeconomic differences *are* a risk factor for inadequate parenting and antisocial behavior in the United States and England, they are *not* a risk factor in Norway and Sweden. Dan Olweus attributes that to the fact that there are greater inequalities in socioeconomic conditions among families in the United States and England (1993).

### 5) Homelessness

Students who are homeless confront a myriad of problems that elevate their risk for problem behaviors. Whether students are homeless because their families are without housing, or they are homeless because they have left their families, the result is the same: the very core of their sense of security is unstable and life is unpredictable. The unstable conditions in which they live affect their ability to consistently meet even the most basic human needs for safety, shelter, and food. Students whose families are homeless are often fatigued from caring for younger siblings and are unprepared for school because they don’t have a quiet place to do their homework. Transportation problems contribute to attendance problems in school. In addition, students may be also dealing with chronic stressors related to family dysfunction, such as alcoholism/drug addiction, abuse, or poverty (Southwest Educational Development Laboratory, 2003).

All of the above stressors are directly or indirectly related to antisocial behavior. Given the right circumstances, other sources of family stress could also promote the development of antisocial behavior patterns (e.g., divorce, unemployment, death, mental illness). Simply being a child in a family “having over four children” is correlated with antisocial behavior if the parents don’t have adequate resources (Rutter, et al. 1983). *All families experience stressors over the course of time. There are two critical questions that will determine the impact on family members:*

- 1) *How long* has the family been in a stressed state?
- 2) *How capable* is the family of coping with the stress?

The risk level for family dysfunction and children’s problem behaviors increases if the stress becomes *chronic* (particularly if there’s a *cumulative effect* with multiple stressors over time). The risk increases further if the parents’ *skill level to cope is inadequate*.

While the specific stressors in families may vary, researchers have identified the following shared characteristics that promote antisocial behavior (Olweus, 1993; Rutter, et al. 1983; Patterson, et al. 1992; Walker, et al. 1995).

## Family Risk Factors

### 1. Poor Emotional Connection and Bonding

Relationships are characterized by *low levels of emotional attachment* and bonding. There is a *lack of warmth and positive attention*. Parents *aren't involved* in their children's day-to-day lives and *don't participate in positive activities* together. The relationships are *unstable* and characterized by *conflict and coercion*. Aggression is an accepted norm.

### 2. Lack of Clear Limits and Consequences

There is a *lack of clear and fair rules* that are *consistently upheld*. Limits and consequences are *unpredictable* and *inconsistent*—and *unrelated to the logic* of the child's actual behavior. Rather, the parents' response is based upon their mood and disposition at the time of the infraction. A rule that is enforced with physical punishment on one day, might go completely unnoticed another day. Because the parents are not involved in their children's daily activities, they *don't do a good job of monitoring or supervising* their behavior. The resulting lack of consistency is exacerbated by the unpredictability of a generally *overly permissive* discipline style that is periodically interrupted by *overly punitive* consequences. Thus, the children grow up not knowing exactly where “the line” of acceptable behavior is or what will happen if they “cross the line.”

### 3. Harsh Disciplinary Practices

Parents of antisocial children tend to use disciplinary practices that are characterized by *hostility* and *explosive outbursts of emotion*. Consequences are designed to punish and control, rather than to teach. Consequences are overly punitive and out of proportion to the seriousness of the violation. They tend to be enforced with expression of anger or frustration. “A...factor that has been found to raise the child's level of aggression is the parents' use of ‘*power-assertive*’ *child-rearing methods* such as physical punishment and violent emotional outbursts. This finding supports the notion that ‘violence begets violence.’” (Olweus, 1993)

Families having the above characteristics are “aggression-generating” systems and they are likely to produce children who exhibit the following traits and behaviors: hostility, bullying/harassment, intimidation, defiance of adult authority, rule infractions, and disrespect for the mores of school and the community. These antisocial patterns are learned by a very early age, and they leave children ill-prepared to be successful when they come to school.

*Children learn what's modeled for them. A child who consistently receives negative responses to social and emotional encounters with their primary caregiver(s) learns that people cannot be relied upon, and he/she ultimately disconnects. In an abusive environment, they learn that the way to get their needs met is to be aggressive and/or violent.*

Jensen, 2000

*To the degree to which parents are viewed through eyes of judgment or blame, our effectiveness to help and support them, and their children, will diminish.*

It is important to remember that a student's risk level for problem behavior could suddenly spike as a result of an unexpected crisis in their life: a divorce, death, loss of family income, teenage pregnancy—any of these things will create stress that could be reflected in a student's behavior in school.

*Note:* The term “dysfunctional” family system is used in this document with reservation because it is both inaccurate and often carries judgmental implications of parental failure and blame. Families that are described as “dysfunctional” are *not* actually dysfunctional. They do, in fact, *function*—they simply function in a highly stressed, survival mode. And, the parents have neither failed nor do they deserve blame—they are simply doing the best they can given the knowledge and skills they have. To the degree to which parents are viewed through eyes of judgment or blame, our effectiveness to help and support them, and their children, will diminish.

Perhaps a more useful way to view parents and families is through the lens of “gifts and missing pieces,” a term coined by Charles King, a school counselor from Minnesota. All individuals and all families have gifts and missing pieces. *Gifts* represent knowledge and skills we have gained that help us live as competent and well-socialized individuals in our society. Having the “skill to resolve conflicts” is an example of a gift. *Missing pieces* are the things we haven't yet learned. The “lack of skills to manage anger” is an example of a missing piece. Some families have more missing pieces than gifts. The fact that parents don't teach their children about anger management is not about a lack of caring or wanting the best for their children. It's about not being able to give what they don't have.

When we look at people and families in terms of gifts and missing pieces, we help free them from the limitations of a self-fulfilling perspective that can keep them, and us, stuck. We will become more adept at seeing, and being able to build upon, their innate strengths and resilience.

## B. Individual Domain: Characteristics and Factors

*Research findings have made it abundantly clear that there are individual characteristics that influence liability to antisocial behavior.*

*Rutter, et al. 1998*

The following risk and protective factors are within the Individual Domain. They are related to a student's biology, mental health, skills, and behaviors.

### 1. Biological Predisposition

Students can come into the world with a cognitive or neurological deficit that predisposes them to problem behaviors by virtue of a variety of disabilities: developmental disorders such as autism and Asperger's syndrome, learning disabilities (LD), ADHD, Fetal Alcohol (FAS/FAE), brain trauma, and chemical dysregulation (Jensen, 2000). There is also a relationship between antisocial behavior and the following characteristics that has been well-researched and indicates the likelihood of "biological substrates": cognitive impairment (e.g., verbal and planning skills), temperamental features (e.g., impulsivity, sensation-seeking, aggressiveness, "hot-headedness"), and impaired processing of social information (e.g., misreading social cues and perceiving negative intentions in other's behavior) (Rutter, et al. 1998).

*In spite of the fact that very few special needs students represent a serious danger to students or staff (Morrison and D'Incau, 2000), they are disproportionately expelled in Michigan.*

*Michigan Public Policy Initiative, 2003*

*It's important to note that none of these factors alone predestine a student to behaviors that lead to suspension or expulsion. "Genetic factors are influential... They do not cause antisocial behavior directly; rather, they constitute one set of influences operating in probabilistic fashion as part of multifactorial causation" (Rutter, et al. 1998). Much depends upon the complex interactions of these factors with the characteristics of the home and school environments, as well as availability of effective community support services.*

In spite of the fact that very few special needs students represent a serious danger to students or staff (Morrison and D'Incau, 2000), they are disproportionately expelled in Michigan (Michigan Public Policy Initiative, 2003). According to the Student Advocacy Center of Michigan (2002), 71% of the students referred to the agency for expulsions were "special needs" students, with 19.6% being special education certified or receiving legal protections. A biological predisposition makes students more vulnerable to risk factors in their environments. This reinforces the need to provide school environments that are rich in protective factors that will help counter-balance their biological risk factors.

### 2. Lack of Connectedness and Bonding to School

Walker, et al. (1983) conceptualize "bonds" as being comprised of three elements: 1) *attachment*: having a positive emotional connection toward people; 2) *commitment*: having an investment in the "social unit"; and 3) *belief*: meaning sharing in the values of that social unit. In this case, the "social



unit” would be the school. Students who are suspended or expelled tend to be *disconnected*:

*Just as in the family arena, the level of caring and support within the school is a powerful predictor of positive outcomes for youth.*

*Benard, 1992*

- 1) They are *disconnected from people* in school. They tend to lack positive emotional attachments to teachers and administrators as a result of years of conflictive disciplinary relationships. Frequently, they have also experienced rejection by the mainstream of students.
- 2) They are *disconnected from a commitment to school* as a social unit. Their level of involvement in activities where they can contribute or have a “voice”—or in any sort of extra curricular activities, is very low (Morrison and D’Incau, 1997).
- 3) They are *disconnected from the primary value of school: learning*. As noted above, one of the most common characteristics of suspended and expelled students is academic failure. “Students who fall significantly behind in school may have difficulty staying connected to school both academically and socially” (Wehlag, et al. 1989). Students who experience academic failure are not likely to value learning. Having parents who don’t place a high value on education, which is often the case for students with a history of school failure, further disconnects students from learning and the school as a whole.

A student’s “disconnection” can manifest itself directly, in the form of aggressive or defiant antisocial behavior. Or, it can be manifested indirectly, through behaviors such as lack of attention or participation in classes, tardiness, or truancy. Either way, it is a factor on a causal pathway that frequently leads to suspension or expulsion.

### **3. Problems with Authority and Limits**

*Kids with serious behavioral problems...have trouble accepting authority, [and] following the general kinds of rules you need in any community....They’re resistant to conforming.*

*Northwest Regional Educational Laboratory, 2001*

*One of the strongest motivations for breaking rules is to fight against a system that diminishes self-worth and importance.*

*Curwin, 1992*

Although, problems dealing with authority and behavioral limits could be related to a situation-specific stressor (e.g., divorce, death, peer problems), when it is an established *behavioral pattern*, it is likely rooted in having grown up in an aggression-generating family system, as described above. Anti-authority problems are characterized by a disrespect and stubborn defiance of authority and rules—often the direct result of family dysfunction. In its less serious forms, this pattern of behavior may be simply a “learned” behavior that is the result of *modeling* in the dysfunctional family system. It could also have a biological component with links to ADD and mood disorders, and dysfunctional serotonin systems (Jensen, 2000). In more serious cases, it can be related to Oppositional Disorder—a condition that has been steadily increasing in school age populations. (Approximately 40 to 50 percent of ADD sufferers

also develop Oppositional Disorder.) Still more severe anti-authority problems could indicate Conduct Disorder, an extremely serious condition that requires referral to professional help. If not identified early and addressed, Oppositional Disorder can develop into Conduct Disorder, a diagnosis that is strongly correlated with future criminal involvement (Jensen, *Fragile Brain Training*, 2000). According to Jensen, students exhibiting these types of disruptive conditions, when compared to others, “have the worst academic performance records, the poorest relationships, and the weakest self-management skills (taking responsibility, planning, controlling anger, and being punctual).” This indicates the need for an effective process within schools for early identification and referral to appropriate support services.

#### **4. Mental Health Issues**

There are a number of mental health problems associated with suspension and expulsion. Based on statistics from the Student Advocacy Center of Michigan, 51.6% of expelled students “exhibited identifiable risk factors prior to expulsion. These risk factors included emotional problems such as depression, suicidal ideation, anger, impulsivity...previous trauma, and victimization by other students. Although these students had exhibited risk factors prior to expulsion, school systems had failed to provide consistent referrals for evaluation or appropriate follow-up services for these students” (2002). It is alarming that Michigan students who have *identifiable* mental health-related risk factors *prior to* their removal from school are expelled at a “significantly higher” rate than national norms.

#### **5. Perceived Lack of Safety in School**

Students need to have confidence that a standard of safety will be upheld in school for all students. Although the lack of a perception of safety in school affects *all* students, it represents more of a risk factor for two groups of students, and it will affect each of the groups differently. The degree to which an individual in either of these groups perceives a lack of safety, the risk to engage in antisocial behavior will increase.

- 1) *Students who bully and harass:* These students are opportunists. They engage in intimidating behaviors that threaten the emotional or physical safety of other students when they believe they can “get away with it.” When they perceive lax enforcement of limits and consequences to deter antisocial behavior in school, they are more likely to interpret that as a license to proceed. They rely on a lack of the school’s ability or willingness to ensure the safety of their targets.
- 2) *Targets of bullying and harassment:* These students live in *fear*—fear of being ridiculed, coerced, humiliated in front of friends, or physically hurt. (It’s interesting to note that “humiliation” was identified as a “child’s worst fear” in a study conducted by Kaoru Yamamoto, at the University of Colorado—they are afraid of “being laughed at” or

*What is the school...norm?  
Is it about homophobia,  
or fear or hatred of  
anyone who is different  
(xenophobia)? Is it about  
the school making it okay  
to belittle others—a hands-  
off, “there’s nothing we can  
do about it” approach to  
children’s interactions...?*

*Garbarino and  
deLara, 2002*



“losing face.”) “Fear of other students is the reason reported by one of every 12 students for dropping out of school” (Greenbaum, Turner, and Stephens, 1989). At one end of the spectrum, a target’s feelings of lack of safety might be related to truancy and poor grades. On the other end of the spectrum, those feelings may result in aggression, as targeted students attempt to defend themselves or seek revenge. Recent school shootings are an extreme example of this type of behavior.

*We do not need more restrictive laws. Eric and Dylan would not have been stopped by metal detectors.*

*Darrell Scott, father of Columbine shooting victim, Rachel Scott*

## **6. Involvement in High Risk Behaviors**

Of all the high risk behaviors a student could be involved with, chemical use is one of the most common that can lead to suspension or expulsion. Removal from school could happen either as a *direct* result of their use, possession, or distribution, or as an *indirect* result of their involvement, (e.g., aggression, truancy, academic failure). The earlier the age of onset of use, the higher the risk for problem behaviors (Development Services Group, 2002). Other high risk behaviors that can directly or indirectly result in removal from school include gambling, teen sex, working more than 10 hours per week (Southwest Educational Development Laboratory, 2003), and associating with negative peer groups.

*The lack of effective social and coping skills is particularly evident among the large percentage of suspended and expelled students who have special needs.*

## **7. Inadequate Social and Coping Skills**

*Antisocial youth often do not display age-appropriate social behavior; they tend to be extremely immature in almost all of their social interactions with peers and adults in school. [They] consistently fail in their social relations with other children, youth, and adults (Parker & Asher, 1987).*

*Walker, et al. 1995*

According to the findings from the National Survey of American Families, students expelled from Michigan schools were 12 times more likely to “frequently” have trouble getting along with others (Michigan Public Policy Initiative, 2003). The lack of effective social and coping skills is particularly evident among the large percentage of suspended and expelled students who have special needs. Many neurological disabilities and mental health problems are characterized by social deficits. For example, in spite of a pro-social intent among students with ADHD and LD, they “experience significant peer problems and social failure” (Murray as cited in Keilitz and Dunivant, 1989).

Students who bully and harass rely on the use of aggression, threats, intimidation, manipulation, and coercion in relationships with their peers and adults alike. They are further handicapped socially due to their tendency to misinterpret

others' behaviors and misattribute hostile intent—a bias that *could* be based in a personal reality if they, themselves, have been a target of aggression and hostility (Rutter, et al. 1998). It is critical not to reinforce that perception with punitive consequences or aggressive interactions when disciplining students.

### **8. Lack of Participation in Constructive Activities**

*The reverse process of participation is alienation, the lack of bonding to social institutions like the family, the school, and the community, a process that has consistently been identified...as a major risk factor for involvement in alcohol and other drugs, delinquency, teen pregnancy, school failure, and depression and suicide.*

*Benard, 1992*

Students who are alienated and involved with problem behavior tend to feel like they “don’t belong” in school and are unlikely to be involved in extracurricular activities. They frequently don’t participate in community-based activities either. The research conducted by Search Institute highlights the importance of youth engaging in structured and meaningful activities because they bring them into contact with “principled and caring adults who nurture skill and capacity through group activities, lessons, relationships, and supervision” (Benson, 1992). Benson also notes that these activities are even more important for those students with “absent, neglectful, overwhelmed, or underskilled families.” For those students, the opportunities for participation in constructive activities and connections with positive role models can make the critical difference in the course of their lives.

*...schools with low levels of problems like delinquency...created a variety of opportunities to ensure that all kids found something they were interested in and could succeed in. “If you bring children in for a variety of things and give them multiple opportunities for success...it’s less likely that you get [an] anti-academic atmosphere” and alienation...*

*Benard, 1992 citing Rutter, 1984*

### **9. Low Academic Achievement**

One of the strongest, single risk factors for suspension and expulsion is low academic achievement. Across studies and irrespective of the precipitating event, the one common red flag is that students who have been removed from school tend to have performed well below average both in terms of grade level and achievement scores. The grade point average for English and Math courses is a key indicator, with the bulk of students recommended for suspension and expulsion having a D+ average (Morrison, et al. 2001). Academic failure is a correlate of “low commitment to school,” a well-researched risk factor for a number of high risk behaviors in the work of Hawkins and Catalano (1992).

### **10. Poor Attendance/Truancy**

According to the National Survey of American Families (1997/1999), students expelled from Michigan schools were 4 times as likely to have a history of skipping school as other students. Numerous studies indicate that truancy is one of the most significant factors related to delinquency (Rutter, et al. 1998).

## ***11. Disciplinary History of Suspension and Expulsion***

*Students who are not educated in the classroom are educated on the streets. There is a direct correlation between suspensions/expulsions and delinquency rates.*

*McDonald Brown and Birrane, 1994*

Removal from school through suspension or expulsion has been found to be a risk factor in and of itself, increasing the likelihood of continued and escalating antisocial behaviors that will ultimately result in involvement with the juvenile court system. “It has been shown that one adjudicated event (i.e., school removal), leads to additional adjudicated events (juvenile justice records)” (Clark et al. 2003).

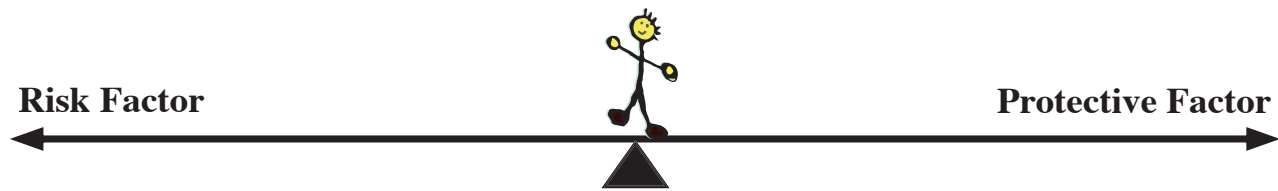
*A behavioral trajectory characterized by student involvement in multiple offenses that lead to suspensions is associated with a “hardening” of social sensitivity on the part of the students.*

*Morrison, et al. 2001*

Students who have been suspended are three times more likely to drop out of school (Skiba, et al. 1999). Suspension and expulsion also increase the risk of teenage pregnancy and parenting, with a 95% increased risk of pregnancy for girls, and 178% increased risk of parenting for boys (Clark, et al. 2003).

*Note:* The assumption is made that no student is suspended or expelled without a legitimate rule infraction, and therefore has responsibility for their misbehavior. However, in cases where schools overly rely upon their use as a disciplinary consequence, “suspension and expulsion” is a “school” risk factor as much as it is an “individual” risk factor.

## Figure 1: Individual Domain Risk and Protective Factors



### **Biologology**

*Do they have any cognitive or neurological impairments or predispositions?*

### **Connectedness and Bonding to School**

*Do they feel connected and like they “belong” in school?*

### **Ability to Cope with Authority and Limits**

*How well to they deal with authority figures and abide with school rules and regulations?*

### **Perception of Safety in School**

*Are they involved in bullying/harassment behaviors, either as “bullies” or as “targets”?*

### **Status of Mental Health**

*Do they have any emotional problems (e.g., depression, trauma, suicide ideation, stress disorder)?*

### **Level of Involvement in High-Risk Behaviors**

*Are they involved with the use of alcohol/other drugs, or other high risk behaviors  
(e.g., gambling, teen sex/parenting, homeless)*

### **Competency with Social and Coping Skills**

*What is their level of competency with social/coping skills (e.g., ability to deal with stress, anger, loss)?*

### **Level of Participation in Constructive and Meaningful Activities**

*What is their level of participation in constructive and meaningful activities in school and community?*

### **Academic Achievement**

*How successful are they academically?*

### **Attendance in School**

*Do their records indicate truancy or good attendance in school?*

### **Disciplinary History**

*Do they have a history of disciplinary interventions, including suspension or expulsion?*

## C. School Domain: Characteristics and Factors

*Expulsion is a process, not merely an event....Child characteristics interact with school discipline philosophy to create differential outcomes for students with behavioral challenges....School characteristics need to be considered in the understanding of how a student comes to a school expulsion event....A school's environment may present students with challenges or assistance in the development and maintenance of appropriate school behavior.*

*Morrison, et al. 2001*

*[In order] to be effective, a disciplinary code must begin with an objective and discernable set of rules which are consistently applied.*

*McDonald Brown,  
et al. 1994*

A school can be characterized by the same risk factors as those identified in aggression-promoting family systems. To the degree that a school possesses those risk factors, it too, will be a stressful and aggression-generating system:

- lack of warmth and positive relationships,
- lack of clear limits and consequences,
- use of harsh and inconsistent disciplinary practices, and
- lack of adequate social and coping skills (Olweus, 1993).

Olweus also identified the following “group mechanisms” that intensify the impact of the above risk factors and increase levels of antisocial behaviors, even among students who would not generally engage in those behaviors (1993):

### Group Mechanisms that Promote Antisocial Behavior

#### *Social Contagion*

*Entry into school is a crossroads for high risk students. Things will either get better, or they'll get worse—depending on the balance of risk and protective factors in the school.*

Studies have shown that both children and adults behave more aggressively as a result of observing someone else behave aggressively, particularly if that person is held in high regard. Over time, aggression will be seen as *the norm* if clear limits and consequences are not employed in response to antisocial behavior.

#### *Weakening of Inhibitions*

When students observe aggression (or other antisocial behavior) being “rewarded,” there tends to be a decrease in their own inhibitions toward aggression, making it more likely they'll engage in a similar behavior. A “reward” could take a variety of forms, including increased image of power and prestige, getting attention from peers, or materially gaining from theft or coercion. Simply getting away without a consequence rewards the behavior. Conversely, when students see a person get a negative consequence for behaving aggressively, their own internal controls against that behavior are strengthened.

## **Diffusion**

When an individual is part of a group that is engaged in antisocial behavior, there is a *decreased* sense of individual responsibility, and they are more likely to participate in the behavior than if they were alone. They also experience fewer feelings of guilt or remorse afterward if they were part of a group.

## **The Causal Model of Antisocial Behavior**

Patterson's "causal model" (1992) describes what is recognized as the "most complete and detailed explanation of the causal events and processes that account for the development and escalation of antisocial behavior." The chain of causal events begins with the family system. As previously noted, chronic family stressors can result in chaotic and destructive parenting patterns. These family systems are prone to producing children with well-established antisocial behavioral patterns by the time they enter school.

*If a young child brings an antisocial pattern to school...he or she has severely elevated risk status for rejection by both peers and teachers. Peer and teacher rejection, in turn, is associated with academic failure, and the child is increasingly isolated. Because of this rejection and social isolation, the antisocial child seeks out others who share the same status, attitudes, and behavioral characteristics.*

*Walker, et al. 1995*

*Thus, internal factors, which may be structural, contextual, climate-related, and/or individualized, cause certain at-risk students to view school as an unwelcoming place, and they become alienated.*

*Jordan, Lara,  
McPartland, 1994*

In other words, if students exhibiting problem behaviors are unable to develop a bond with their peers or their teachers, they are likely to join a negative peer group. Once students gain affiliation with a "deviant" peer group having shared attitudes and behaviors, their level of risk for engaging in increasingly delinquent behaviors is significantly higher. "Seventy percent of those children have their first felony arrest within two years of becoming a fully enfranchised member of this deviant peer group....This is a highly predictable path" (Walker, et al. 1995).

As reliable as Patterson's model is in predicting serious problems with delinquency that result in expulsion and entry into the judicial system, enough is known about effective school-based strategies and the power of protective factors to interrupt that pattern. Entry into school is a crossroads for these students. Things will either get better, or they'll get worse—depending on the balance of risk and protective factors in the school.

## **Positive Characteristics and Protective Factors of School**

For students coming to school from chronically stressed family backgrounds, their risk for suspension and expulsion will be significantly higher as a result of the *compounding effect* of the school's risk factors interacting with their family and individual risk factors. Conversely, schools that are rich in the above environmental protective factors can literally change the entire trajectory of a student's life.



The ground breaking research of Dan Olweus (1993) has demonstrated that if environmental risk factors are *inverted* into positive characteristics, they act as “countervailing forces” that buffer students from the negative impact of family risk factors.

*There are certain aggression-generating factors (i.e., poor childhood conditions, certain forms of child rearing, and family problems). The degree to which a school's students will manifest [antisocial behavior] is not only dependent on the amount of aggression-generating factors....It is also largely contingent on the strength of countervailing forces. The attitudes, routines, and behaviors of the school personnel...are decisive factors in preventing and controlling...as well as in redirecting such behaviors into more socially acceptable channels.*

*Olweus, 1993*

Following is an *inverted* version of the major school environmental risk factors. In their positive form, they are protective factors. These factors are consistently identified in the research on effective schools, prevention, positive youth development, and resiliency (Henderson, et al. 1996; Olweus, 1993; Davis, 2003; Rutter, et al. 1998; Walker, et al. 1995; Northwest Regional Educational Laboratory, 1995 and 2001; Search Institute 2003). As protective factors, they will help counter-balance students' risk factors:

### ***1. Emotional Connection and Bonding***

*The curriculum and the environment in most schools represents a mainstream point of view....This can be alienating and discouraging to students of minority cultures.*

*Thompson, 1991*

*Students feel a greater sense of engagement, belonging, and personal value when their classmates and teachers get to know them. Acting out decreases as informal structures replace rules.*

*McRobbie, 2001 citing Gregory, 2000*

There is a sense of connection and bonding both with the school and the people in the school that results in large part from the quality of relationships and level of personalization a school is able to establish. Relationships in the school are characterized by *warmth and positive interactions* between students and their peers, as well as between students and staff, including the administrator. The principal takes a “visible and supportive role...talking informally with teachers and students, speaking to them by name, and expressing interest in their activities” (Northwest Regional Educational Laboratory, 2001). School staff *model respect* in their relationships with students, avoiding the use of sarcasm, intimidation, or anger to manage students' behavior. Students are given ample *positive attention* by staff; they acknowledge positive behavior and do things with students that are mutually enjoyable.

There is a *sense of community*, where students feel as though they *belong*. The bonds of community reach out to include students having special needs and minority students. Staff and students are provided opportunities to increase their awareness and acceptance of cultural differences.

Students have *input into decision-making* where appropriate, and have opportunities to make *meaningful contributions*. There are ample *opportunities for student involvement* in school activities (e.g., special interest clubs, peer helping, service learning or community service), including opportunities for students who are *not* athletes or traditional student leaders.

## 2. Clear Limits and Consequences

*Behavioral limits and consequences are clearly articulated*—known to all students and upheld by all staff. Research supports the use of student input and participation in the development of school rules and disciplinary practices, noting that it “creates a sense of ownership and belongingness” (Northwest Regional Educational Laboratory, 2001).

*Consequences are predictable and consistently applied.* A study conducted to assess rates of bullying indicated that while a bullying incident occurred once every seven minutes, adults intervened only four percent of the time (Craig and Pepler, 1997). While this study was related to bullying at the elementary level, the point it makes is valid for any antisocial behavior at any grade level: When adults do not intervene, students perceive it as a lack of behavioral limits and consequences. This translates as tacit permission to engage in those behaviors.

The *consequences are consistently applied* to all students. Students will not perceive “consistent” if some students are seen to be “above the law” while others receive more frequent or more punitive consequences. Students see inconsistent treatment as unfair, and respond with feelings of resentment and lack of respect for authority. When all students are held accountable for their behavior and treated equitably, irrespective of race, gender, ethnicity, status, or behavioral “reputation,” it promotes respect for the limits and trust in the people who enforce those limits. Clearly, in order for consequences to be predictable and consistently applied, there needs to be *adequate adult supervision*.

## 3. Respectful Disciplinary Practices

*Never underestimate the power of a child’s need to save face.*

*Bluestein, citing a middle school teacher, 2001.*

When violations of limits occur, adults apply *non-hostile and non-punitive sanctions*. Consequences are commensurate with the level of infraction: neither too harsh nor too lenient. Care is taken to avoid “reinforcement errors” (i.e., consequences that unintentionally reinforce the problem behavior) such as working in the office after being removed from class, or suspension, which for some students is like taking a “vacation from a setting [they]...find aversive” (Bluestein, 2001).

Public embarrassment is avoided when disciplining, since this will also tend to initiate a power struggle and escalate misbehavior. According to Olweus, the

*In schools having a history of high rates of suspension, “observers noted [that there were] many more authoritative behaviors (e.g., talking down to and scolding students).”*

*Christle, Nelseon, and Jolivet, [2002?]*



most effective consequences are those that “cause some discomfort without being hostile” and that are not “directed against the person” (1993).

*The best way to avoid escalation is to choose consequences that do not anger, humiliate, embarrass, or demean the student. This is especially true of high-risk students. Because they have nothing to lose by continuing the battle, the teacher has almost no leverage in getting them to back down.*

Curwin, 1992

*Instead of...a detention or averballashing...[students were] told to reflect on whom they had wronged and what they would do to make sure that such behavior doesn't happen again....[The high school] cut out-of-school suspensions in half in the last four years.*

Snyder, 2003

While the use of consequences is essential, consequences *alone* will be limited in their effectiveness—especially for students who have social and coping skill deficits. In order to promote authentic and lasting behavioral change, disciplinary systems need to include components designed to promote reflection and to teach, guide, and support the desired changes in behavior (Northwest Regional Educational Laboratory, 1995). Use of out-of-school suspension is avoided whenever possible, “making use instead of in-school suspension accompanied by assistance and support” (Cotton, 1995).

*Discipline is carried out in a neutral, matter-of-fact manner.* The presence of negative emotions on the part of the adult will shift the focus from the behavior to the relationship level. Ultimately, this shift will interfere with the student's ability to *learn* from the intervention, and will risk escalating their anger and misbehavior. It will also damage the adult's relationship with the student—thus reducing their ability to be a positive influence. For those students coming from an aggression-generating family system, any form of hostility will only serve to reinforce their belief that aggression and power are effective ways to meet their need.

#### **4. Social and Coping Skill-Building**

*...learning prosocial skills can lead to improvements in student relationships, behavior, attitudes, cooperation and achievement, and help to eliminate negative and antisocial behaviors as well (Lantieri & Patti, 1966). These are skills that can, indeed, be taught.*

Walker, et al. 1995

Social and coping skills are taught to enhance students' ability to form positive peer and adult relationships, cope effectively with stress, and resist high-risk behaviors such as aggression/violence and chemical use. Examples of competencies taught include *empathy, problem-solving, multicultural education, anger management, impulse control, and friendship skills.*

*To be truly effective, social skills interventions should be planned and offered in a similar fashion as any other academic course of study and should be considered in terms of years rather than weeks...*

Mcevoy, et al. 2000, citing Walker, Stieber, and Bullis, 1997

These skills are taught beginning in kindergarten and continue through high school, and in addition to teaching the cognitive aspects related to these topics, students are provided opportunities to “practice real-life application of these skills” (Northwest Regional Educational Laboratory, 1995). Strategies such as cooperative learning, service learning, peer and cross-age tutoring/mentoring are utilized to provide opportunities that add depth and relevance to the social competencies being taught (Bluestein, 2001).

### 5. Parent and Community Partnerships

Strong parent and community partnerships represent an additional protective factor that is specifically relevant to the school environment.

*...it is crucial to involve parents in the intervention process as much as we can. Change is certainly possible without parental involvement, but schools and students benefit when parents are involved as equal members of the team.*

Davis, 2003

Parents are made to feel *welcome in the school*. They are *kept informed* of school goals, activities, and challenges—and have *opportunities for involvement and input*. Proactive steps are taken to develop *positive relationships* with parents, especially those with students having known antisocial behavioral patterns. Recognizing that many of these parents may have a history of negative contact with school, efforts are made through regular phone calls, notes, and meetings to let them know the school *cares about their child* and also sees their child’s *positive traits and successes*. Contacts are made with these parents early in the year for no other purpose than to *tell them about “things their child is doing right”* (Davis, 2003). This can lay a foundation for including parents in a positive intervention process when problem behaviors occur. When there is a problem, *parents’ thoughts and concerns are listened to with respect*, with as many suggestions being acted upon as possible (Davis, 2003)—while still maintaining the standards and consistency of the school’s discipline policy.

*...simply seeking to increase parental involvement in school activities may not necessarily be helpful....The particular ways in which parent-school interactions are dealt with are probably crucial.*

Rutter, 1998

There are also *strong partnerships with the community*, enabling the school to draw upon its resources for needed support and services: community service and service learning programs, mentoring programs, speakers for classroom presentations, funding, and services for students in need of community supports (e.g., mental health services, substance abuse treatment, social supports).

*Researchers have generally found that well-disciplined schools are those which have a high level of communication and partnership with the communities they serve. These schools have a higher-than-average incidence of parent involvement in school functions, and communities are kept informed of school goals and activities.*

Northwest Regional Educational Laboratory, 2001

## 6. Early Intervention/Support Services

*The presence or absence of effective prevention and intervention programs that serve students with a range of risks and abilities is likely to affect the rates of school disciplinary events.*

*Morrison, et al. 2001*

In view of the school's legal and educational responsibilities, *early intervention with identifiable problem behaviors* is critical and acts as an additional protective factor. The school recognizes the need to address *any* problem that interferes with a student's ability to succeed socially and academically in school. Therefore, there is a *formal student assistance process* in place for *early* problem identification and referral to appropriate support services, either within the school or the community. It's important that the student assistance process be responsive to a broad range of behavioral "red flags," including problems with academics, troubled family or peer relationships, chemical use, mental health concerns, and disruptive/antisocial behaviors of any kind. In addition, there is a *crisis response plan and a trained team* in place that can respond to a variety of traumatic incidents.

The *school has a guidance counselor* who has time allocated for providing individual/group counseling and supporting students in need of remedial social/coping skill development (e.g., anger management, impulse control). The use of small support/skill groups is especially important with students having a history of problem behaviors. In an innovative school for high risk students in Foley, Minnesota (Turning Point School), *all* students participate in weekly support groups as part of their alternative learning program. The groups are designed to support personal growth and achievement of behavioral goals, including maintaining sobriety.

Whether providing school-based or community-based support, the goal is to intervene before problem behaviors become entrenched and potentially dangerous—and to let youth know that their school cares about them as "people" as well as "students."

## The Power of School Protective Factors

Schools in the United States and Europe that have implemented strategies related to the above protective factors demonstrate the following impact on student behavior (Olweus, 1993):

- Fifty percent reduction in bullying and victimization among students
- Marked reduction in general antisocial behavior, including fighting, theft, alcohol use, vandalism, and truancy
- Significant improvements in order and discipline
- More positive social relationships
- More positive attitude toward schoolwork
- Improved attitude toward school in general

## Summary

As Morrison said, “A school’s environment may present students with challenges or assistance in the development and maintenance of appropriate school behavior” (2001). Thus, whether a school’s environment presents students with additional “*challenges*” or with “*assistance*” will depend upon whether or not the adults consciously promote warm, harmonious relationships and bonding; set and uphold clear limits and consequences; and consistently use respectful disciplinary practices.

These protective factors form the basic framework for schools to provide a safe and orderly learning environment that discourages a wide range of antisocial behaviors related to suspension and expulsion. The comprehensive implementation of the above strategies can play a critical role in intervening in a disturbing and predictable path that takes students from antisocial behavior to suspension and expulsion, delinquency, and ultimately to prison. The lack of a *systemic* approach that incorporates these research-based strategies will result in an exacerbation of the very types of behavior a school is trying to prevent: truancy, academic failure, rule infractions, aggression, suspension, and expulsion.

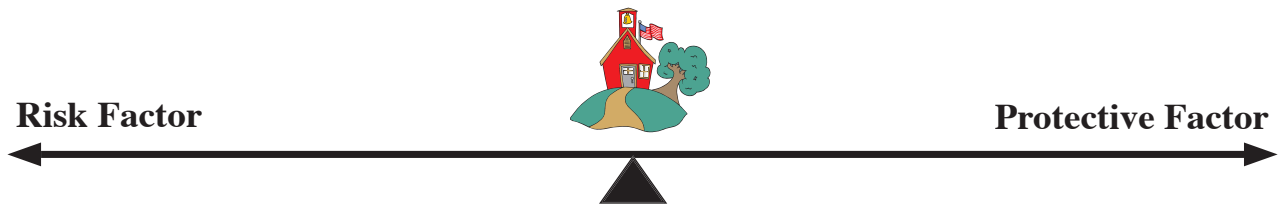
*This picture of family distress, school failure and student discouragement suggests that alternative strategies to punishment for school offenses are needed to assist these students toward improved behavioral and academic trajectories.*

*Morrison, et al. 2001*

*Effective schools exert positive influences on student behavior despite conditions in the home, social status, gender, race, or ethnicity.*

*Mcevoy, et al. 2000*

## Figure 2: School Domain Risk and Protective Factors



### Connectedness and Bonding to School

*Is there a sense of warmth and positive interactions between students and peers, and students and adults?*

*How much “positive attention” do students get from teachers and administrators?*

*Is there a strong sense of “community” where all students feel they belong?*

*Do students have opportunities for involvement, meaningful roles, and opportunities for decision-making?*

### Limits and Consequences

*How well do students and staff know what the behavioral limits and consequences are?*

*How consistently do all staff uphold the behavioral expectations?*

*Are the consequences predictable and consistently applied to all students?*

*Have students had input into school rules and consequences?*

### Respectful Disciplinary Practices

*Are consequences non-punitive and commensurate with the level of infractions?*

*Is a reflection and learning component included as part of the consequence?*

*Are disciplinary interventions applied in a non-hostile manner that is neutral and matter-of-fact?*

### Social and Coping Skills

*Are social/coping and multicultural skills taught to all students each year?*

*Are students who need help in deficit areas provided with skill-building opportunities?*

*Is the reinforcement of social/coping skills integrated into the school day in teachable moments?*

### Parent and Community Partnerships

*Are parents made to feel welcome in school?*

*What opportunities are there for parents to be meaningfully involved in school?*

*Are proactive steps taken to provide parents with positive feedback regarding their child (including students having problems in school)?*

*Are there strong partnerships with the community?*

### Intervention/Support Services

*Is there a counselor on staff who has time allocated to provide counseling and skill development?*

*Are there school-based support/skill groups available for students?*

*Is there a formal student assistance process in place for early problem identification and referral to support?*

*Is there a crisis response plan and trained team in place to respond to critical incidents?*

## D. Community Domain: Characteristics and Factors

There are many community factors identified in the literature that can affect youth risk levels: availability of alcohol and drugs; availability of firearms; community crime; economic deprivation; social disorder and lack of safety (e.g., hate crimes, vandalism and graffiti, condemned buildings); community instability (e.g., mobility and housing issues), and low attachment to the community (Development Services Group, 2002). Hawkins, et al. (1992) include “community laws and norms favorable toward drug use” to their list of community risk factors.

Some of these *risk* factors are so global in their scope that it is difficult to envision how to impact them. There are, however, some well-researched community *protective* factors that can directly influence them, especially if the effort is part of a school-community partnership. The following protective factors emerge from a broad base of research in healthy youth development and resiliency (Development Services Group, 2002; Search Institute, 2003; Henderson, et al. 1996; Pittman, 1993):

### 1. Presence of Caring, Supportive Adults

*The most critical resiliency builder...is a basic trusting relationship, even with one adult, within the family or without, that says, “You matter.”*

Werner, 1990 cited in Gelham, 1991

In order for children to have a sense of attachment and bonding to their community, they need to have positive *connections* to people within the community. It is through relationships with *individuals* that feelings of attachment extend to *institutions*, such as businesses, organizations, churches—and ultimately to the community as a whole. The research on resiliency is very clear: the presence of *at least one* caring and supportive adult is critical, particularly for those children who live with adversity and family problems. For those children, someone from outside the family can be that source of caring and support—perhaps a teacher, member of the clergy, employer, or a mentor.

*What is evident from nearly all the research into the family environments of resilient children is that, “despite the burden of parental psychopathology, family discord, or chronic poverty, most children identified as resilient have had the opportunity to establish a close bond with at least one person...” (quote from Werner, 1990).*

Benard, 1992

Even for children whose parents *do* provide high levels of caring and support, meaningful connections with other adults are important. Indeed, one of the protective “assets” identified by Search Institute specifically refers to the need for “nonfamily, intergenerational support.” In the words of Peter Benson

*No longer can groups of people work in isolation, at cross purposes, or without the necessary understanding and support of those who are affected by their decisions.*

R. Golarz and  
M. Golarz, 1994



(1997), “support is not only a family enterprise. It also belongs to the larger community.”

## ***2. High Expectations of Youth***

*...our society tells children and youth that “they have no real place in the scheme of things, that their only responsibility is to go to school and learn and grow up. When they have learned and grown up, which is supposed to occur miraculously at age 18, they can perhaps make some modest contribution as a citizen.”*

*Benard, 1992  
citing Hedin, 1987*

Children have a way of “living up” (or “living down,” as the case may be) to the expectations adults have of them. Unfortunately, in the case of communities, expectations of youth tend to be alarmingly low. One way low expectations are communicated to youth is the lack of opportunities to actively participate in community life.

Bonnie Benard points out that a “denial of opportunities” for youth to be “meaningful participants and contributors in community life” is a *natural consequence* of a community’s low expectations (Benard, 1992 citing Kurth-Schai, 1988). Using the criteria of “being given responsible roles” and “feeling valued” as indicators, studies conducted by Search Institute confirm the existence of low expectations in communities across the nation. Data from 217,000 students in grades 6–12 indicate that only 28% feel they were given useful roles in their communities and 25% believe their community values young people (1999–2000). In addition to whether or not youth are given opportunities to participate and contribute, a community’s expectations are communicated by hundreds of large and small interactions, for example, how people greet and talk to youth in public, how they are portrayed in local media, and how employers treat youth in their jobs.

The lack of opportunities to participate in community life and be treated with respect will result in youth feeling disconnected and alienated from their communities. Conversely, communities that provide youth with opportunities for participation and positive interactions will *project high expectations*. The resulting sense of “being a part of” and connections of attachment will serve as a powerful motivator for youth to “live up” to those high expectations.

## ***3. Opportunities for Participation***

*The natural outcome of having high expectations for youth, for viewing youth as resources and not problems, is the creation of opportunities for them to be contributing members of their community.*

*Benard, 1992*

Not only will the community benefit from the perspectives, talents, and energy of its young people, feelings of being needed and valued will also benefit the young people. One of the assets included in the “Empowerment” category of Search Institute’s essential building blocks is the concept of giving young people “useful roles in the community” (2003). Opportunities to make *meaningful* contributions will add to their feelings of self-esteem, competency—and to bonding with the people and institutions of their community. The importance of opportunities for involvement can also be viewed from a different perspective: “The reverse process of participation is alienation, the lack of bonding to the

social institutions like the family, the school, and the community” (Benard, 1992).

Involvement in service activities is a concept that is gaining attention as “a growing body of literature supports the power of youth involvement in service to strengthen both academic and social outcomes” (Benson [c.1990] citing Moore and Allen, 1996). Search Institute data reveal that students involved in at least one hour of “helping behavior” on a weekly basis had lower rates of involvement in high-risk behaviors. Involvement in projects and programs to help others is associated with lower at-risk behavior rates (Benson [c. 1990]).

*When children are given responsibilities, the message is clearly communicated that they are worthy and capable of being contributing members of a family [school, or community].*

*Benard, 1992*

Responsibilities and roles for youth that were once critical for the very survival of families and communities have largely been replaced by “autonomy and leisure, and [are] frequently accompanied by no adult supervision” (Benard, 1992). In effect, adolescence can be a time of “rolelessness”—leaving teens with limited positive options for directing their energy. Providing youth with opportunities to contribute *needed* service will not only build their sense of self-esteem and competency, it will also give them a meaningful *role* to play in their community—and thus, a connection.

*Note:* For additional information about three bodies of protective factor research, refer to Section IIIA: *Effective School Domain Strategies* and Section V: *Resources*. (See *Asset Model*, *Resiliency Model*, and *Positive Youth Development Model*.)

*Unless communities begin to actively engage their young in the affairs of community—providing places and moments of connection, involvement, partnership, input, and responsibility—we risk reinforcing an anti-adult youth culture...*

*Benson, 1997*





## II. SUSPENSION AND EXPULSION: INTENT AND REALITY

 **Key Question:** *What is the intent of suspension and expulsion, and what is the reality of its impact upon students?*

### Suspension and Expulsion

Suspension and expulsion remove students who are exhibiting problem behaviors from the learning environment of the school. There are a variety of ways in which students can be removed:

1. in-school suspension,
2. short-term, out-of-school suspension (10 days or less),
3. long-term, out-of-school suspension or expulsion (up to 180 days), or
4. permanent expulsion (Michigan Department of Education Pupil Accounting Manual, 2002).

### The Intent

“...suspension typically is intended by the administration...as a punishment” for an “inappropriate act or behavior” (Raffaele-Mendez and Knoff, 2003), with the presumed rationale being that such punishment will motivate a behavioral change in the student. In cases where weapons are involved, an additional goal is to ensure safety in the school environment. There is a substantial amount of research and practical evidence that indicates that while the *intent* is *positive*, the overall *reality* is *negative*.

*Expulsion is a process, not merely an event....When a student commits an expellable offense at school, it is often not a surprise in the context of the student's developmental history.*

*Morrison, et al. 2001*

*...if a primary goal is to reduce misbehavior, out-of-school suspension and expulsion are completely counter-productive...*

*Building Blocks for Youth, 2003*

### The Reality

*“Zero tolerance” began as a prohibition against guns, but it has quickly expanded into a frenzy of punishment and tougher disciplinary measures in American schools. Ironically...recent research indicates that as schools adopt more zero tolerance policies they in fact become less safe, in part because the first casualties of these measures are the central, critical relationships between teacher and student and between school and community.*

*W. Ayers, Dohrn, and R. Ayers, 2001*

Not only have suspension and expulsion been found to be ineffective (Morrison, et al. 2001), they are likely to result in a number of negative student outcomes. “Repeated suspensions for minor misbehavior convey a clear message to young people that the school system is authoritarian and arbitrary, and does not value

them as individuals” (Building Blocks for Youth, 2003). The consequences of arbitrary or overly punitive discipline are costly: students respond with anger, resentment, mistrust, and disconnection from the authority figures in school—which is only a step away from disconnection from school and learning. The likely outcome of “tough” disciplinary actions is an increase in anti-authority and antisocial behavior.

*People’s responses to levels of punishment are influenced by their feelings on its fairness and reasonableness (Hart, 1978). If harsh punishments are viewed as discriminatory and unreasonable, the main result may be an increase in resentment and a correspondingly reduced general deterrence effect.*

*Rutter, et al. 1998*

*Expelling a child from school may act to further alienate him or her from the learning environment and those in it, and may even intensify those troubling behaviors targeted for elimination.*

*Morrison, et al. 2001*

Furthermore, suspension and expulsion can create “educational gaps from which many students cannot recover” resulting in *academic failure, grade retention, and dropping out of school* (Raffaele-Mendez, et al. 2003 citing Brooks, Schiraldi, and Ziedenberg, 1999; Nichols, Ludwin, & Iadicola, 1999). These unintended consequences set the stage for a domino effect of additional negative behaviors and consequences, including *teenage pregnancy* and increasingly serious *antisocial and delinquent behaviors* that result in involvement in the *juvenile court system* (Clark, et al. 2003). Thus, instead of decreasing problem behaviors, suspension and expulsion are likely to increase them.

*Out-of-school suspension and expulsion interrupt students’ educational progress and remove students from school at a time when they may most need stability and guidance in their lives...[making it] impossible for the students to keep up with the curriculum....Even more ominously, suspensions and expulsions reduce adult supervision and give students unstructured time in which to get in trouble.*

*Building Blocks for Youth, 2003*

### **Zero Tolerance—and Suspension and Expulsion**

In spite of the data indicating the ineffectiveness of removal from school, its use has increased during the past decade. Out-of-school suspensions “are one of the most commonly used forms of discipline in the United States” (Raffaele-Mendez, et al. 2003 citing Dupper and Bosch, 1996). This rise is due, in part, to the introduction of “zero tolerance” policies in the early 1990s (Skiba, Peterson, Boon, and Fonatanini, 2000). In response to concerns of an increase in juvenile homicides with firearms and fear of school violence, Congress passed the Gun-Free Schools Act of 1994, which “required states to expel firearm-carrying students for at least one calendar year” (Building Blocks for Youth, 2003). The concept of “zero tolerance” held great appeal as a “no-nonsense response” to fears of school violence (Skiba, et al. 2000). Not only did the “hard line”

approach increase in frequency of use since the early 1990s, the range of behaviors that carry mandated suspension and expulsion has also increased.

*Since the passage of the federal Gun-Free Schools Act of 1994, Michigan's legislature has enacted a series of laws requiring expulsion (or suspension) for a number of offenses, extending far beyond the firearm violations that are the subject of the federal laws.*

*Michigan Public Policy Initiative, 2003*

According to data compiled by the Michigan Public Policy Initiative, "Michigan's policies are particularly stringent" in comparison with national norms. In addition to the consequences for firearm violations required by the Gun-Free Schools Act, they include *mandated* expulsion for the following behaviors: possession of a dangerous weapon, arson, criminal sexual conduct on school grounds, and physical assault against a school employee. Michigan law requires suspension or expulsion for physical fighting and assaults against other students (even if no weapon was involved), and verbal assaults against school employees or volunteers (2003). Students have also been suspended or expelled for use of disobedience, theft, vandalism, alcohol/drug use, possession of drugs, and drug distribution (Michigan Public Policy Initiative, 2003). In some schools, zero tolerance includes the "use of pagers or laser pointers, and sexual harassment" (Skiba, 2000 citing Skiba and Peterson, 1999).

*...students viewed most disciplinary problems as resulting from rules that were unjust or unfairly applied....Students who are already at-risk for disruption may see confrontational discipline as a challenge to escalate their behavior.*

*Skiba, 2000*

*citing Gottredson, 1989*

Another example of the stringency of Michigan's policy is the fact that while the federal law allows for some discretion by the administrator, Michigan law does not:

*...the current federal law requires that the "chief administering officer" of the local educational agency have the authority to modify the expulsion requirement in any particular case, Michigan's statute does not explicitly include this requirement of discretion.*

*Michigan Public Policy Initiative, 2003*

Clearly, violent behavior and dangerous assaults against staff should not be tolerated. However, the literature indicates that the vast majority of suspensions and expulsions are "misbehaviors" that are "adolescent, but not violent" (Building Blocks for Youth, 2003).

*While it is difficult to ascertain just how many students are expelled from Michigan schools each year because data are not routinely collected and reported to a central source and because data are not collected in uniform ways....It is estimated that more than 3,600 students were expelled from Michigan schools during academic year 1999-2000....Many of these students were expelled for behaviors that once would have been considered nothing more than adolescent antics or poor judgment.*

*Michigan Public Policy Initiative, 2003*

A study conducted by Morrison and D’Incau (1997) indicated that nationally, only about 20% of the students disciplined as a result of zero tolerance policy represented the types of infractions that the policy was intended to address: threats to school safety (Holloway, 2001/2002). In Michigan, only 16% of expulsions involved a weapon and 38% of expulsions were for fighting without a weapon (Michigan Public Policy Initiative, 2003).

*Push effects are factors located within the school itself, which negatively impact the connection adolescents make with the school’s environment and cause them to reject the context of schooling. This rejection...may manifest in disruptive behavior, absenteeism, or a cessation of academic effort.*

*Jordan, et al. 1994*

*Data consistently show that...referrals for drugs, weapons, and gang-related behaviors constitute but a small minority of office referrals leading to suspension. Fighting among students is the single most frequent reason for suspension, but the majority of suspensions occur in response to relatively minor incidents that do not threaten school safety. At the middle school level, disrespect and disobedience are among the most common reasons for suspension, and a significant proportion...are for tardiness and truancy.*

*Skiba, et al. 1999*

In addition, there is evidence that suspensions and expulsions are not reserved as a last resort for non-violent infractions after other interventions have failed. Students are sometimes removed from school after a first offense to set an example:

*An assault in the fourth degree, which is a misdemeanor, may be as simple as a school yard fight where one student got the upper hand... school officials may “overcharge” a student for a particular incident in order to “send a message” to the child, his friends, his parents, and the court.*

*Building Blocks for Youth, 2003*

## **Misuses of Suspension and Expulsion**

### ***Confusing Terminology and Misapplication***

Both in Michigan and across the nation, there are indications of confusion and misuse of the zero tolerance policy in interpreting and/or administering suspensions and expulsions. There are instances where there has been a very loose interpretation of terms, such as “assault,” “arson” or “weapon.” There have been examples where the definition of “weapon” was interpreted to include “key chains” (Michigan Public Policy Initiative, 2003 citing Noguera, 2001), and “toenail clippers” (Michigan Public Policy Initiative, 2003 citing Office of Juvenile Justice and Delinquency Prevention, 2001). There are also instances of ridiculous interpretations of the term, such as classifying “chicken fingers” as a weapon (Michigan Public Policy Initiative, 2003 citing Light, 2001).

While there is a tendency to assume that examples such as these are infrequent “aberrations” resulting from “overzealous administration,” Skiba finds that the pervasiveness with which these sorts of things happen “across time and location suggests that the over-extension of school sanctions to minor misbehavior is

not anomalous, rather it is inherent in the philosophy and application of zero tolerance” (2000).

### ***Pushouts***

Another misuse of zero tolerance policies includes the use of suspension and expulsion to literally “push” students out of school who are viewed as low-achieving and troublesome students. “Schools want to get rid of the troublemakers and the kids who bring down the test cores (Dohrn, 2001).

*In ethnographic studies, school disciplinarians report that suspension is sometimes used as a tool to “push out” particular students, to encourage “troublemakers” or those perceived as unlikely to succeed in school to leave.*

*Skiba, et al. 1999 citing Bowditch, 1993 and Fine, 1986*

Multiple short-term suspensions, which can be given at the school’s discretion without formal proceedings, can be a form of “push out.” When given in a series, short-term suspensions “cumulatively, reflect a loss of learning time which equals a long-term suspension or expulsion” (McDonald Brown, et al. 1994). The consequences of a significant loss in learning time are not difficult to predict: problems keeping up academically and increased feelings of disconnection from school—which frequently result in students dropping out.

Sometimes the process of pushing a student out of school is more subtle, consisting of “failing to follow up when a student is absent, ignoring the student when he or she does come to school, or making it clear that the student is not expected to work or achieve at school, only to be quiet and behave” (Thompson, ed. 1991). These things can result in the student disconnecting from school. They internalize the message that they aren’t wanted in school and they can’t succeed academically—setting the stage for behavioral problems that lead to suspension or expulsion or dropping out of school.

There is a disturbing pattern of disproportionate use of suspension and expulsion policies for certain populations: students having special needs, minority students, and young students (Morrison, et al. 2001).

### ***Special Needs Students***

*...special needs students are caught often in the web of zero-tolerance....Case histories and demographic descriptions of excluded students have revealed a heterogeneous group, very few of whom presented real or serious dangers to students or staff.*

*Morrison, et al. 2001*

Students having special needs are disproportionately expelled, both on the national level (Morrison, et al. 2001) and in Michigan (Michigan Public Policy Initiative, 2003). According to the Student Advocacy Center (2002), 71% of the students expelled during the 1999-2000 school year had special needs. Of

*As risk indicators, conduct problems and ADHD are particularly deserving of “red flags” in terms of risk for future recommendations for expulsion (Loeber and Stouthamer-Loeber, 1998).*

*Morrison, et al. 2000*



those, 19.6% were “special education certified or were receiving protections under the Rehabilitation Act of 1976.” The remainder had identifiable emotional problems, including ADHD (Michigan Public Policy Initiative, 2003).

### **Minority Students**

*Unfortunately, minority students continue to be grossly over-represented when rates of suspension are compared...[they] are more likely to be disciplined (a) for minor offenses and (b) with disproportionately higher levels of punishment or intensive intervention.*

*Raffaele-Mendez, et al. 2003 citing Morrison and D’Incau, 1997*

*...every human encounter—positive or negative—reflects cultural assumptions upon which communication rules are based....School personnel are more likely to perceive students’ behaviors, including their communicative behaviors, as being disruptive and discordant when those behaviors diverge from the norms of the school.*

*Northwest Regional  
Educational Laboratory,  
2001*

Data presented in *Zero Tolerance Policies and Their Impact on Michigan Students* indicate that Michigan youth of color are suspended and expelled at a higher rate than white students. African American students are affected the most. Although they represent only 17% of school enrollment, African American students constitute 39.1% of Michigan’s expulsions and are being suspended at a rate that is 2.5 times that of the general population of students. (It is interesting to note that according to Nichols (1999) race was a factor in communities with moderate-income levels. The effect of race was *not* seen in the poorer communities—rather, in those communities, poverty seemed to be a more significant factor, with boys who qualified for free or reduced lunch being more than twice as likely to be removed as were their peers whose families did not qualify for free or reduced school lunch.) Latino students were suspended at 1.4 times and Native American students 1.3 times the rate of the general student population (Michigan Public Policy Initiative, 2003).

National studies indicate similar disproportionate rates of suspension and expulsion for students of color. They are over-represented even after controlling for factors related to socio-economic differences and the types of misbehavior (Skiba, et al. 1999). Skiba found that schools that rely most heavily on suspension and expulsion as a general practice to address misbehavior show the “highest rates of minority over-representation.”

Cross-cultural communication could play a role in the disproportionate number of minority students being suspended and expelled. Because 5 of the 9 most commonly reported behaviors “involve cultural and communicative issues, e.g., verbal threats, classroom disruptions and disrespect,” this factor warrants exploration.

*Students with cultural and communicative norms which are incongruous with the school’s norms are more likely...to engage in unacceptable behavior....School personnel should be open to examining the causes of perceived misbehavior in the classroom.*

*Northwest Regional Educational Laboratory, 2001*



## Young Students

*Generally speaking, the students affected by zero tolerance policies are not the older, tougher students the law may have been created to address...students...(grades 6-9) were expelled at higher rates than any other age group during academic year 1999-2000 [in Michigan].*

*Michigan Public Policy Initiative, 2003*

The report goes on to say that 14 is the most common age for expulsion in the State of Michigan. This is consistent with national data regarding exclusion of students in middle school. Students in grades 6-9 are undergoing tremendous physical, cognitive, social, and emotional transitions. Moving from elementary to secondary levels is a significant transition in itself—it is a time “where they encounter school environments that are larger, less personal, and require greater self-control and self-direction” (Raffaele-Mendez, et al. 2003). It is a pivotal time when students’ need for support and guidance is increasing, and the availability of guidance and support, by virtue of the contextual structure of middle and high schools, is decreasing. Exclusionary consequences without *structured opportunities to learn* from mistakes, especially during this developmental time period, can lead to long-term academic failure and dropping out of school.

*It's time for schools to develop legitimate high standards by refusing to fall for the lure of what is easy and sounds good and choosing instead what is truly best for children.*

*Holloway, 2001/2002  
citing Curwin and  
Mendler, 1999*

## Male Students

Data gathered by the Family Independence Agency in Michigan indicate that 65% of students expelled from schools in 1999 were male (Michigan Public Policy Initiative, 2003). The Student Advocacy Center of Michigan presents an even “more troubling picture” based upon an analysis of 91 expulsion cases from 1999 to 2000: 82.4% of Michigan expulsions involved males. This last figure is more closely in line with national suspension data indicating that males are being suspended at a rate that is approximately twice that of females (Raffaele-Mendez, et al. 2003).

## Summary

In summary, the scope and use of suspension and expulsion have gone far beyond the intent of the original policies and legislation of the 1990s. There are schools that overly rely on suspension and expulsion as the mainstay of their discipline policy, excluding students as a first step rather than reserving it as a last resort for chronic problems or for potentially dangerous situations. There are also schools that misinterpret and misuse zero tolerance policies, often at the expense of special needs students, minority students, and young students (grades 6-9).

The data regarding the effectiveness of suspension and expulsion as part of a harsh “zero tolerance” disciplinary strategy are consistent and clear: *Suspension and expulsion are not effective*. They are not effective in promoting a positive behavioral change within individual students, and in fact are likely to compound

students' problem behavior. Nor are they necessarily effective in creating a safer school; they can even result in a "less safe" learning environment.

That being said, *there are definitely times when it is necessary to use suspension and expulsion*. However, there are a number of strategies that will 1) *decrease* the number of times it is necessary to use suspension and expulsion, and 2) *increase* their effectiveness on those occasions when it is necessary to use them.

*Eliminating zero tolerance policies is a hard sell because the concept is simple to understand, sounds tough, and gives the impression of high standards for behavior....Any intervention for changing children's behavior that is simple is simple-minded, and those that substitute formulas for decisions made by people who understand the circumstances are dangerous. It's time for schools to develop legitimate high standards by refusing to fall for the lure of what is easy and sounds good and choosing instead what is truly best for children.*

*Holloway, 2001/2002 citing Curwin and Mendler, 1999*

The following recommendations (bold type) appear as strategies to reduce suspensions and expulsions in the Michigan Public Policy Initiative publication, "Zero Tolerance Policies and Their impact on Michigan Students" (2003). They are taken from the work of Pedro A. Noguera ("Finding Safety Where We Least Expect It") that appears in *Zero Tolerance: Resisting the Drive for Punishment in Our Schools* (2001).

*In a study of 988 schools, researchers found that for every 400-student increase in the high school population, there would be approximately a one percent rise in the dropout rate.*

*Southwest Educational  
Development Laboratory,  
2003*

### **Michigan Public Policy Initiative Recommendations**

#### **1) Reduce anonymity, alienation and the impersonal character of schools.**

*A common feature of many large schools is that the connections between adults and students are weak, and, as a result, many students lack consistent meaningful contact with adults.*

*Noguera, 2001*

There is a significant body of literature that indicates that small schools may have an advantage in being able to provide environments that promote feelings of connection and bonding (McRobbie, 2001). A meta-analysis of the literature comparing large schools to small schools on a number of categories indicates that the ideal size for secondary schools is 400-500 students (Northwest Regional Educational Laboratory, 1996). While developing a sense of community may be easier to accomplish in small schools, there are many things large schools can do to meet the social and

emotional needs of students, such as creation of schools or academies within a school, advisor/advisee programs, homerooms, student assistance programs, block scheduling, reducing the number of students assigned to counselors, mentoring programs, etc.

**2) Promote a climate of respect by responding quickly and consistently to minor infractions.**

*...responding to minor offenses sends the strong message that any attempt to undermine the values of a school community will be addressed immediately.*

*Noguera, 2001*

“Zero tolerance” doesn’t have to mean: “Step out of line and *you’re out!*” It can mean: “Step out of line, and *we will respond.*” It’s critically important to respond “quickly and consistently to minor infractions” so students know what the behavioral expectations are and that the expectations will be upheld. However, it is equally important to respond to infractions with consequences that are fair and that are implemented without violating the dignity of the student. As educators, in order to *teach* respect, we must *model* respect—even when disciplining.

**3) Adopt a preventative approach to discipline utilizing strategies that encourage students to take responsibility for their behavior and learn from their mistakes.**

*...discipline should not be used to exacerbate poor attendance or academic performance. Rather, whenever possible, students should be encouraged to learn from mistakes, and punishments should be designed to encourage reflection on their behavior.*

*Noguera, 2001*

There are many strategies that encourage reflection and learning, including a guided, written reflection process; transformative conferences; community service; after-school tutoring; and peer mediation. For students who have a pattern of anti-social behavior, consequences alone will not help them learn, or be motivated to use, pro-social skills. They need consequences *plus* reflection and skill-building in order to learn from their mistakes.

*[The problem is that suspension and expulsion rarely have] “a logical, functional, or instructive connection to the offense or infraction; and it usually occurs in the absence of additional interventions that focus on teaching or reinforcing students’ more prosocial or appropriate responses to difficult situations.”*

*Raffaele-Mendez, et al. 2003*

**4) Provide numerous opportunities for students to become more deeply engaged in school and activities that further their development.**

There are three aspects to the concept of engagement: 1) extracurricular engagement, 2) social engagement, and 3) intellectual engagement. With regards to *extracurricular engagement*, when students are involved in activities in the school that require practice, they’re busy. They simply have less free time on their hands in which they might become involved in antisocial activities. With regard to *social engagement*, providing time for students to develop positive social relationships will help them feel

accepted and like “they belong.” This will help minimize bullying and harassment problems in school, and consequently help ensure a safer environment. Lastly, students who are *intellectually engaged* are less likely to misbehave and get into trouble. They are more likely to enjoy learning and like school—and have an investment in their academic success.

*...researchers have found that teachers who are able to intellectually engage their students are less likely to experience disruptions or other problematic behavior.*

*Noguera, 2001 citing Alschuler, 1994*

There are many ways to promote engagement in students, including providing: 1) a wider range of extracurricular activities (e.g., art clubs, chess clubs, informal sports); 2) experiential learning activities (e.g., ropes courses, team initiatives); 3) service learning projects; 4) brain-compatible learning strategies (strategies based on the neuroscience of learning); and 5) school-to-work programs.

The Michigan Department of Education adds one more recommendation to those suggested by Noguera:

**5) Provide early intervention and treatment for at-risk students, particularly those who have been identified as having mental health concerns.**

*Students who receive help and support to deal with pressing personal concerns [and challenges] will be able to focus their remaining energy more efficiently on their schoolwork and important tasks of developing academically, socially, and emotionally.*

*Newsam, 1992*

*What is the function or purpose of the acting out behavior? Is it linked to unresolved academic or social problems? Is the teacher receiving adequate support in trying to manage the student's behavior? Unfortunately, although suspension can protect the interests of other students, and staff, it often is not functionally linked to the core problem that results in the suspension.*

*Raffaele-Mendez, et al. 2003*

In view of the number of Michigan students who have been suspended or expelled with a wide variety of identifiable mental health concerns, it is essential to have a formal procedure to gather and analyze information regarding a student's problem behavior and determine what sort of support services are needed. Comprehensive Student Assistance Programs are designed to perform both functions: 1) gather and analyze information, and 2) identify appropriate support services. The range of support services might include in-school supports, such as participation in an anger-management group, being connected to a peer mentor, or receiving special education services. They might also include out-of-school referrals for professional mental health services. For students having chronic behavioral problems, a functional behavioral assessment may also be useful.

*Thus, schools need to have procedures in place to functionally analyze the reasons for a student's multiple suspensions, and when a student is*

*suspended repeatedly to determine if the behavior is a reflection of a specific disability (IDEA, 1999)...Moreover, for students with chronic behavior problems, it is recommended that schools work with families and community agencies to develop strategies for school-lined and wrap-around services and problem-solving interventions.*

*Raffaele-Mendez, et al. 2003*

The above recommendations incorporate all of the protective factors identified in Section I: *(School Domain)*. When implemented, they work together to develop a balance of “social capital” with students. The resulting bonds of respect and “reciprocity” not only promote safe and orderly schools, but also contribute to a successful learning environment. By creating a safer and more positive learning environment, we will ultimately decrease the number of times it is *necessary* to suspend or expel students.

And for those students whose behavior calls for suspension or expulsion, the research calls for us to think creatively and find ways to keep students connected to the larger learning community while they are out of the regular school setting. Strategies to increase the effectiveness of suspension and expulsion will be addressed in more detail in Section III: *From Research to Practice: Strategies for Making Connections*.

*It also is very important for schools to have alternatives to suspension available. Although there are times when students must be removed from their regular classrooms, this does not mean that they have to be completely removed from a school’s broader learning environment. Some schools have in-school suspension programs available. Others have alternative suspension sites where students can be supervised on the day(s) of their suspensions. Still others use Saturday School programs for some suspensions. Regardless, it is recommended that in-school suspension and alternative-to-suspension programs:*

- (a) involve a rehabilitative component (as opposed to being strictly punishment-oriented),*
- (b) actively involve parents (e.g., by requiring parent involvement at the alternative site), and*
- (c) be linked to other support services for students and families (e.g., through collaborative partnerships with local social service agencies).*

*In the end, a focus on the goal of suspension must be maintained: to understand why the inappropriate behavior is occurring, to develop and implement remedial interventions, and to decrease or eliminate the occurrence of future inappropriate behavior and suspensions.*

*Raffaele-Mendez, et al. 2003*

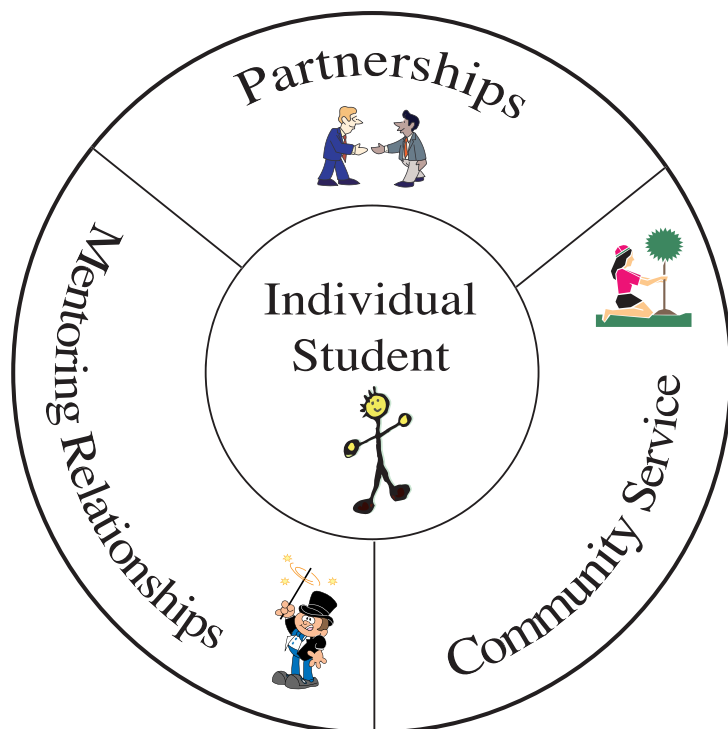




### III. FROM RESEARCH TO PRACTICE: STRATEGIES FOR MAKING CONNECTIONS

**Key Question:** *How can we help suspended and expelled students connect to their schools, the people in their schools, to learning, to their communities, and to themselves?*

#### A. Structured Community Domain Strategies



**Figure 3: Community Domain Environmental Protective Factors**

There are protective factors in the community that can promote students' social and academic education. While research indicates *all* students can benefit from school connections with the community, they play a particularly critical role for students serving out-of-school suspensions or expulsions who find themselves excluded from the school's learning environment at a time when they most need structure and supportive relationships. There are three major components in the Community Domain that can serve as a "delivery system" for numerous protective factors:

1. Community Partnerships
2. Community Service Projects
3. Mentoring Programs

*Note:* Descriptions of specific strategies in each of the three components will be described in the next installment of the Resource Guide!

*The full integration of schools into neighborhood and community life can do much to rebuild the social infrastructure that has been so devastated by the social and economic problems of the past quarter century.*

*Walker, 1995*



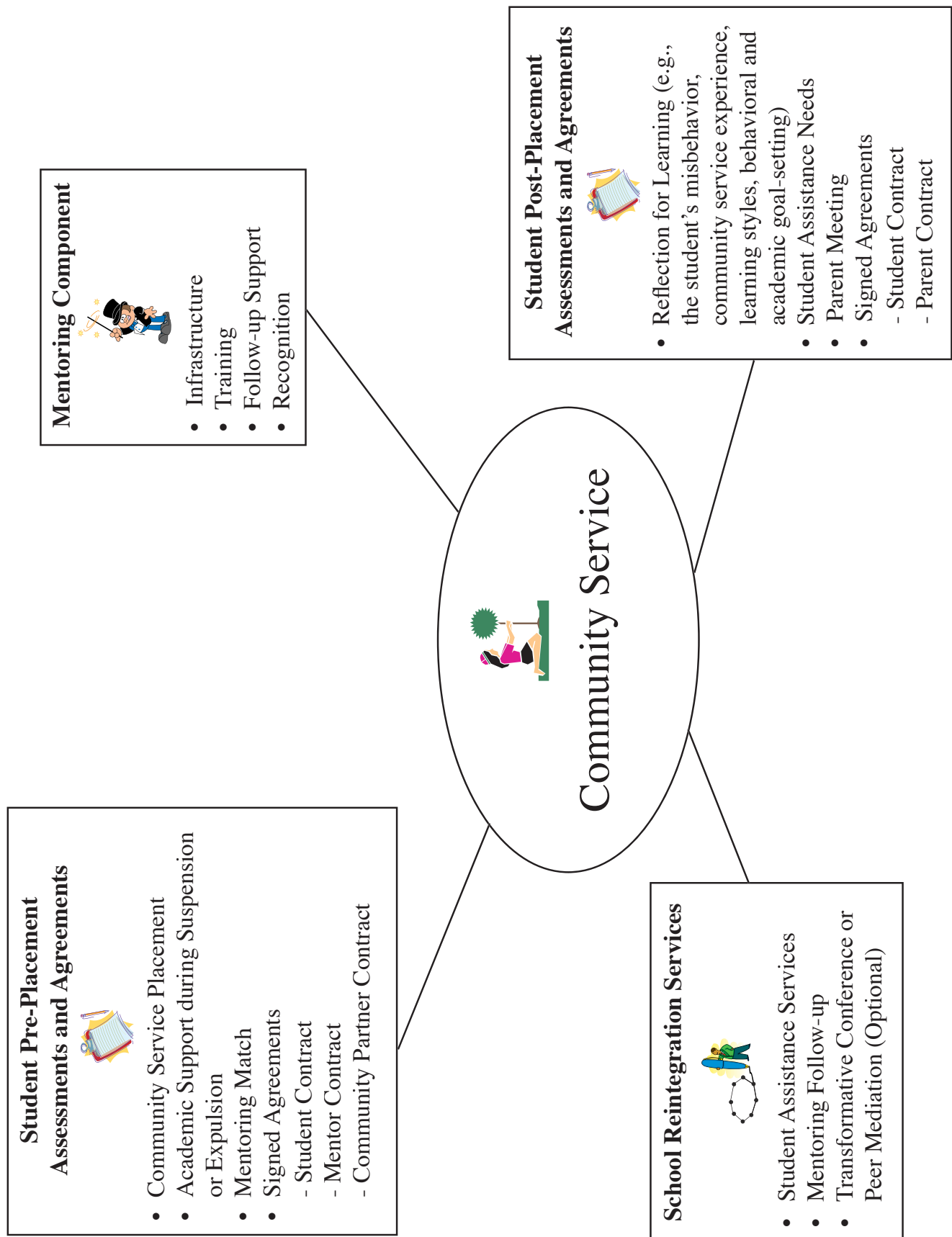
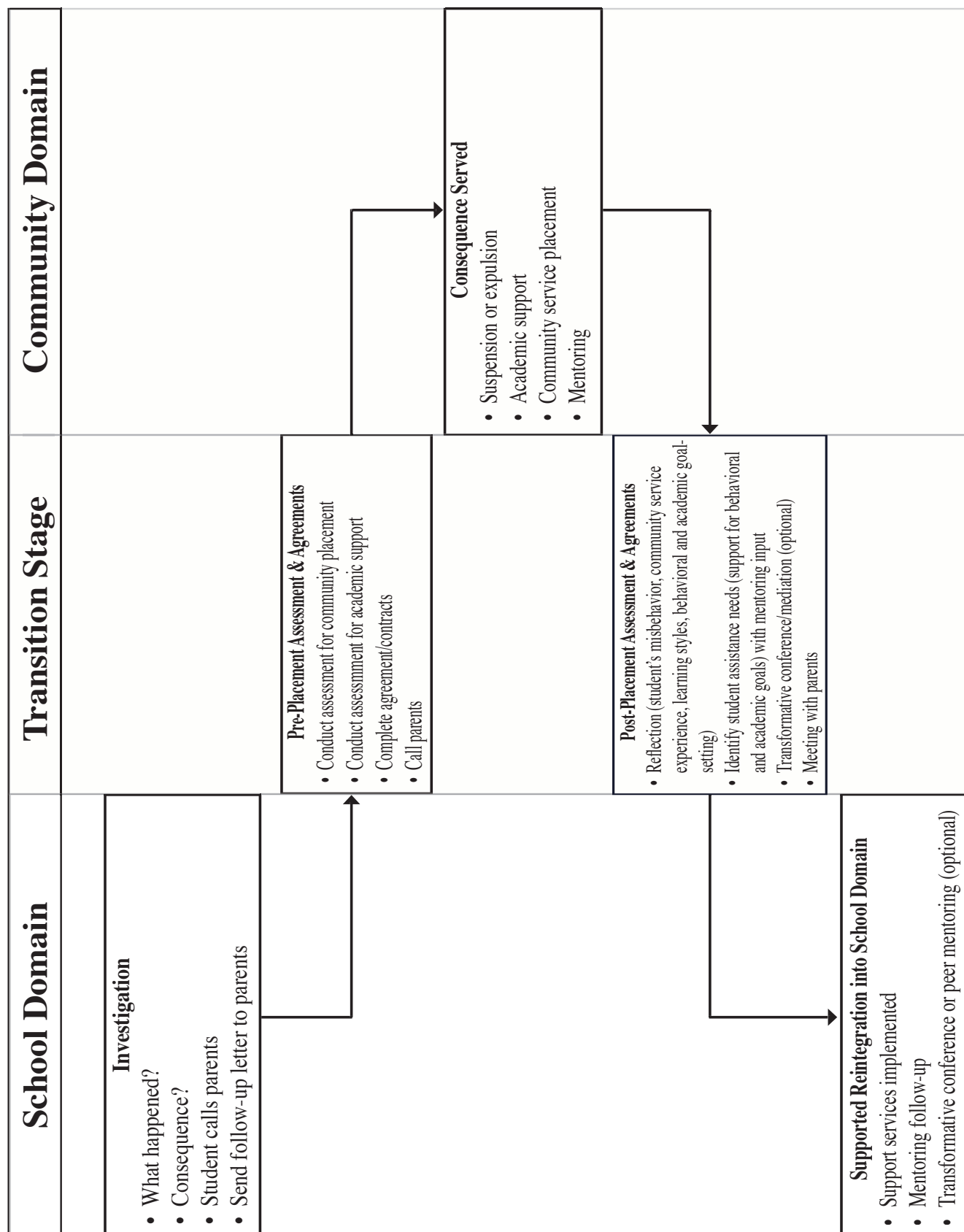


Figure 4: Community Service Mindmap

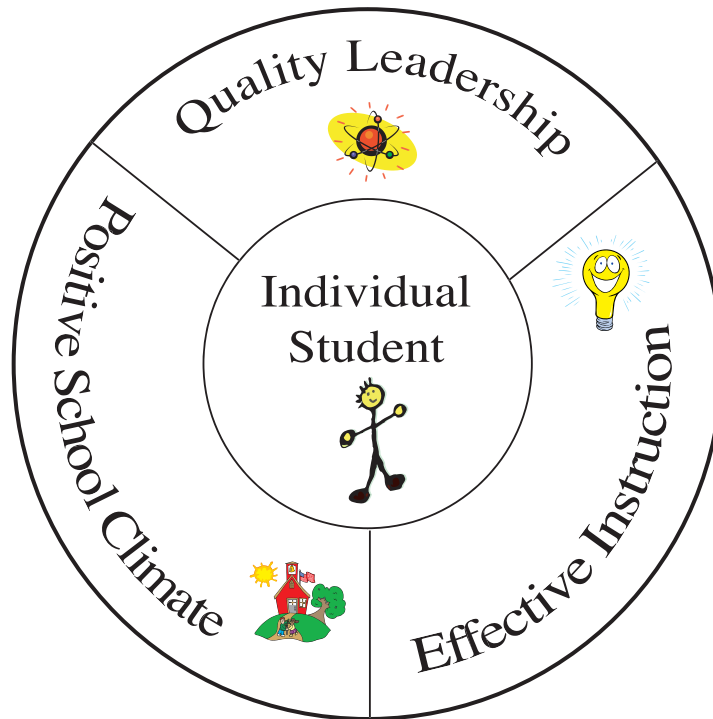


**Figure 5: Domain Flow Chart for IIP (Individual Intervention Process) Suspended or Expelled Students**

## B. Effective School Domain Strategies

The most common characteristic of...safe schools is a strong sense of community. It is also not a coincidence that these schools are also places where students and teachers feel supported, where students are academically engaged, and where trust, respect, and norms of reciprocity are sufficient to promote behavior that is conducive to high levels of involvement and support from the parents and the communities they serve. Safety at these schools is a by-product of supportive social capital, one of few school reforms that actually cost very little.

Noguera, 2001



**Figure 6: School Domain Environmental Protective Factors**

There are three components in the Effective School Domain that are based upon the findings of a meta-analysis of research conducted by the Northwest Regional Educational Laboratory (2001) to determine, “characteristics which distinguish effective schools...schools in which all students master priority objectives.”

1. Quality Leadership
2. Positive School Climate
3. Effective Instruction

The Northwest Regional Educational Laboratory research article that inspired this categorization (“Effective Schooling Practices and At-Risk Youth: What the Research Shows”) is reprinted with permission in Section V: *Resources*. An *Effective Schools Survey* is also included in that same section that schools can use as a self-assessment tool. The hope is that schools can identify their current strengths and needs, and use that information to develop a long-term plan for systemic change that will result in “keeping kids in school” with increased student success, both academically and socially!

*Note:* On the following pages is an overview of the projected research-based strategies that relate to each of the above components that will be described, along with a rationale, in the next installment of the Resource Guide.

## Overview of Strategies for Effective Schools

### 1. Quality Leadership

*Note:* This section will include descriptions and research regarding effective instructional leadership and organizational systems change.

### 2. Positive School Climate

#### (a) Positive Strength-Based Relationships

(e.g., student-student, staff-student, staff-staff, staff-parents, school-community)

- Asset-Development/Resiliency (underlying philosophy and focus)
- Mentoring (formal/informal; intergenerational/peer)
- Social/Coping Skills (conflict resolution/problem-solving skills curriculum)
- Character Education Curriculum
- Cultural Competence (for students and staff)
- Competence in De-Escalation and Non-Verbal Communication
- Strong Parent Partnerships
- Strong Community Partnerships

#### (b) Clear Limits and Consequences

- Written Behavioral Expectations and Consequences (clearly communicated to all students, staff, and parents)
- Effective Consequences (fair, incremental, non-punitive, and designed for learning, i.e., they include structured reflection and remedial skill-building opportunities)
- Bullying /Harassment Prevention Program
- Transformative/Restorative Conferencing
- Alternatives to Out-of-School Suspension and Expulsion
- Structured Support Programs for Suspended (out-of-school) and expelled students (e.g., Community Service)  
(See *Section III: Figure 4: Community Service Mindmap* and *Figure 5: Domain Flow Chart*)

#### (c) Opportunities for Student Leadership and Involvement

- Opportunities for Student Input into School Rules and Procedures (meaningful involvement)

- Opportunities for Student Activities and Recognition (including a *variety* of talents and interest areas)

**(d) Student Support Services**


- Student Assistance Program (identification and referral to in-school and community-based services)
- Functional Behavioral Assessments
- School-Based Counseling and Support/Skill Groups
- Crisis Response Capacity (written plan and staff trained to Respond to critical incidents)

**(e) Attractive, Well-Kept School and Grounds**

**3. Effective Instruction**

- Use of Neuroscience-Based Strategies (group interaction, multiple teaching modes, graphic organizers/mind maps, projects, experiential activities, layered curriculum, facilitation techniques, etc.)
- Cooperative Learning
- Service Learning

## IV. PLANNING AND IMPLEMENTATION: THE CHANGE PROCESS

 **Key Question:** *How do we motivate and maintain a systems change that will prevent suspensions and expulsions and promote student success for all?*

*...consider the American penchant for ignoring the structural causes of problems. We prefer the simplicity and satisfaction of holding individuals responsible for whatever happens: crime, poverty, school failure, what have you. Thus, even when one high school crisis is followed by another, we concentrate on the particular people involved—their values, their character, their personal failings—rather than asking whether something about the systems in which these students find themselves might also need to be addressed.*

*Kohn, 1999*

*...until recently we have attempted to alter education in a piecemeal fashion.*

*Golarz, 1994*

*The new problem of change, then...is what would it take to make the educational system a learning organization—expert at dealing with change as a normal part of its work, not just in relation to the latest policy [reform initiative, education or prevention strategy], but as a way of life.*

*Fullan, 1993*

*Note:* Descriptions of specific strategies for an effective systems change process will be described in the next installment of the Resource Guide!





## V. RESOURCES

### **Key Question:** *What resources are available?*

The following categories of resources will be included in this section upon completion:

- A. Annotated Bibliography of Research Articles and Books
- B. Community Service Grant Contact Information:
  - 1) SAPE Technical Support Consultants
  - 2) Michigan Department of Education Project Director
  - 3) Project Evaluator
- C. Assessment and Planning Tools

### **A. Annotated Bibliography of Research Articles and Books**

The following articles and books are recommended reading. A more complete Annotated Bibliography will be added at a later time:

#### **Articles:**

- 1) Druian, Greg, and Jocelyn A. Butler. “Effective Schooling Practices and At-Risk Youth: What the Research Shows.” *School Improvement Research Series* 2001. Northwest Regional Educational Laboratory. <<http://www.nwrel.org/scpd/sirs/1/topsyn1.html>>. This article provides an overview of the three components of the Effective Schools Domain.
- 2) “Zero Tolerance Policies and Their Impact on Michigan Students: Zero Tolerance Policies in Context.” *Spotlight* January 2003. Michigan Public Policy Initiative. <[http://www.mnaonline.org/pdf/spotlight%202002\\_12.pdf](http://www.mnaonline.org/pdf/spotlight%202002_12.pdf)>. This document provides an excellent overview of the zero tolerance policy and its application in Michigan. It includes data related to suspension and expulsion and recommendations for change.
- 3) “Hardwired to Connect: The New Scientific Case for Authoritative Communities.” 2003. Commission on Children at Risk. <<http://www.americanvalues.org/html/hardwired.html>>. An excellent article describing research on the importance of connections.

#### **Books:**

- 4) Gallegos, Arnold, ed. *School Expulsions, Suspensions, and Dropouts: Understanding the Issues*. Bloomington, IN: Phi Delta Kappa International, 1998. This volume includes a collection of nearly 30 excellent articles related to suspension, expulsion, and drop outs. Examples of topics addressed include: causal structures, impact, cultural disproportion of Native American students, legal issues, dress codes and

gang activity, school uniforms, classroom management, alternative education programs for expelled students, vocational entrepreneurship for youthful offenders, in-school suspension, anger management for students, truancy, and block schedule restructuring.

- 5) Bluestein, Jane. *Creating Emotionally Safe Schools: A Guide for Educators and Parents*. Deerfield Beach, FL: Health Communications, 2001.

This book provides one of the most comprehensive overviews of a systems approach to creating an educationally sound and safe school environment. It's highly recommended.

- 6) Olweus, Dan. *Bullying at School: What We Know and What We Can Do*. Oxford, UK: Blackwell, 1993.

Dan Olweus conducted the ground breaking research upon which current state-of-the-art bullying prevention programming is based.

- 7) Jensen, Eric. *Different Brains, Different Learners: How to Reach the Hard to Reach*. San Diego: The Brain Store, 2000.

This is a user-friendly book that describes the neuroscience behind a variety of learning and behavioral impairments—along with strategies for educators.

## B. Community Service Grant Contact Information

### 1) SAPE Technical Support Consultants

#### **CALHOUN ISD (17111 G. Drive N, Marshall, MI 49068)**

|            |            |                               |
|------------|------------|-------------------------------|
| Guy Golomb | Work phone | 269-781-5141                  |
|            | Work fax   | 269-781-8792                  |
|            | E-mail     | golombg@calhoun-isd.k12.mi.us |

#### **EATON ISD (1790 E. Packard Hwy., Charlotte, MI 48813)**

|                 |            |                        |
|-----------------|------------|------------------------|
| Charlotte Koger | Work phone | 517-543-5500 ext. 1161 |
|                 | Work fax   | 517-543-4870           |
|                 | E-mail     | ckoger@eaton.k12.mi.us |

|            |            |                        |
|------------|------------|------------------------|
| Sara Lurie | Work phone | 517-543-5500 ext. 1111 |
|            | Work fax   | 517-543-4870           |
|            | E-mail     | slurie@eaton.k12.mi.us |

|                |            |                          |
|----------------|------------|--------------------------|
| Polly Brainerd | Work phone | 517-543-5500 ext. 1239   |
|                | Work fax   | 517-543-4870             |
|                | E-mail     | pbrainer@eaton.k12.mi.us |

|                |            |                       |
|----------------|------------|-----------------------|
| Martha Neilsen | Home phone | 517-627-4703          |
|                | E-mail     | neilsenrm@comcast.net |

#### **KENT ISD (2930 Knapp St. NE Rd., Grand Rapids, MI 49525)**

|              |            |                         |
|--------------|------------|-------------------------|
| John Belaski | Work phone | 616-365-2270            |
|              | Work fax   | 616-364-1489            |
|              | E-mail     | johnbelaski@kentisd.org |

#### **MACOMB ISD (44001 Garfield Rd., Clinton Twp., MI 48038-1100)**

|            |            |                 |
|------------|------------|-----------------|
| Lucy Smith | Work phone | 586-228-3491    |
|            | Work fax   | 586-286-2809    |
|            | E-mail     | lsmith@misd.net |

#### **MARQUETTE-ALGER RESA (321 East Ohio. St., Marquette, MI 49855)**

|                  |                    |                          |
|------------------|--------------------|--------------------------|
| Dee Lindenberger | Work phone         | 906-226-5122             |
|                  | Work fax           | 906-226-5141             |
|                  | E-mail             | dlinden@maresa.k12.mi.us |
|                  | Michigan Toll Free | 1-800-562-7868           |

#### **WAYNE RESA (33500 Van Born Rd., Wayne, MI 48184-2497)**

|              |            |                  |
|--------------|------------|------------------|
| Kathy Gibson | Work phone | 734-334-1608     |
|              | Work fax   | 734-334-1218     |
|              | E-mail     | gibsonk@resa.net |

## **2) Michigan Department of Education (Project Director)**

**MICHIGAN DEPARTMENT OF EDUCATION Office of Safe Schools,**

**John A. Hannah Building, 608 West Allegan St., P.O. Box 30008 Lansing , Mi 48909**

Bob Higgins

Work phone

517-373-1024

Work fax

517-373-1233

E-mail

higginsr@michigan.gov

## **3) O'Neill Consulting/Madonna University (Project Evaluator)**

**MADONNA UNIVERSITY (36600 Schoolcraft Road, Livonia, MI 48150)**

Jim O'Neill

Work phone

734-432-5734

Work fax

734-432-5393

E-mail

joneill@madonna.edu

## **C. Assessment and Planning Tools**

The *Connections Effective Schools Survey* is included as a self-assessment tool designed to help schools identify their strengths and needs in each of the three components of the school domain:

- A. Quality Leadership
- B. Positive School Climate
- C. Effective Instruction

A copy of the Survey, along with instructions for administering it on-line are included in this section.

## STAFF Version



JENNIFER M. GRANHOLM  
GOVERNOR

STATE OF MICHIGAN  
DEPARTMENT OF EDUCATION  
LANSING

Title IV, Part A, Section 4126  
Community Service Grant (CSG) Contract



THOMAS D. WATKINS, JR.  
SUPERINTENDENT OF PUBLIC  
INSTRUCTION

### ***Connections: Keeping Kids in School***

## **School Effectiveness Survey - STAFF Version**

### **Instructions for CSG Project Directors**

#### **What does the School Effectiveness Survey-Staff Version measure?**

This survey consists of 25 items designed to measure perceptions of school climate, leadership and instructional practices among school administrators, teachers, counselors and support staff. The instrument was designed by Dee Lindenberger of SAPE (Strategic Alternatives in Prevention Education); in collaboration with Jim O'Neill, MDE Evaluation Consultant for the CSG project, to provide programmatic needs assessment information for schools involved in the CSG project.

#### **Is this survey required as part of the CSG contract?**

The survey is not required, but it is offered by MDE to assist as a *programmatic needs assessment* for the next grant cycle application. In addition, consider these advantages of participating in the survey:

- School climate is a central issue in many districts as part of school/district improvement efforts.
- Results from this survey can be used with those of the student version of the same survey to provide "triangulated" feedback about school climate.
- The report will provide valuable needs assessment information which helps target program efforts as well as secure funding and other support from a variety of sources.
- Data analysis and report generation are provided by MDE at no cost to grant recipients.
- Your individualized report will include benchmarks from aggregated results of all other participating CSG recipients. (Note: Your Individual results will not be identified in reports sent to other grant recipients – they will be combined with results from others to form aggregate benchmarks).
- The same survey will be administered next grant cycle and that report (also provided by MDE) will include year-to-year comparisons.

#### **What is the deadline for completing this survey?**

MDE will provide survey results to all participating CSG recipients by March 2, 2004. In order to provide sufficient time to analyze the data and generate reports, all surveys must be completed by **Friday, February 13, 2004.**

#### **How long does it take to complete the survey?**

The survey should take no more than 20 to 25 minutes to complete.

**Who should complete the survey?**

As mentioned earlier, this survey is not required as part of your CSG project. If you decide to participate, the survey should be completed by *all* school administrators, staff, counselors, and support staff from schools participating in the CSG project. The following grantees should survey their CSG school site(s):

- Detroit: Crosman Alternative HS
- Detroit: Trombley Alternative HS
- Flint: Whittier MS
- Hazel Park: Breakfast Club and Advantage
- Lake Orion: Lake Orion HS and Alternative Ed
- Pottersville: NEC HS
- South Redford: Thurston HS

For CSG recipients not listed above (e.g., ISDs, large LEAs), there are numerous school sites that could be surveyed. The decision of which schools to include is at the discretion of the CSG recipient. As you decide, consider including schools that have these characteristics:

- The schools vary in some way from each other demographically (e.g., urban vs. rural; high-income vs. low-income; large vs. small schools; high-risk vs. low-risk population)
- The schools have relatively high levels of suspensions and/or expulsions.
- The schools have “buy-in” regarding school improvement and are seeking “school profile” data to inform those efforts.

**How many respondents at each site should complete the survey?**

To ensure that grantees can be used as reliable benchmarks for each other, *all* administrators, teachers, counselors, and other support staff at each school should complete the survey.

**How do staff complete the survey?**

Each staff member will need to use a computer with access to the internet. The survey web site is: <http://home.comcast.net/~joneillphd/MDE-CSG-SchoolEffectiveness-Staff.html>. Once accessed online, the survey includes instructions.

**What happens to the survey results? When will they be available to me?**

The results will be tabulated for and reported separately to each CSG recipient by Jim O'Neill, the Evaluation Consultant for the CSG project. The report will include results for the grantee's participating school(s) as well as aggregated benchmark data from other CSG recipients. Please note that individual results from your site will not be identified in reports sent to other grant recipients – they will be combined with results from others to form aggregate benchmarks.

The results will be available on or before the CSG Workshop on March 2, 2004, which will include a session on how to utilize this report for the grant application for next grant cycle.

**Who should I contact if I have questions or concerns?**

Contact Jim O'Neill at: [joneill@madonna.edu](mailto:joneill@madonna.edu)

**Thank You!**



## STUDENT Version



JENNIFER M. GRANHOLM  
GOVERNOR

STATE OF MICHIGAN  
DEPARTMENT OF EDUCATION  
LANSING

Title IV, Part A, Section 4126  
Community Service Grant (CSG) Contract



THOMAS D. WATKINS, JR.  
SUPERINTENDENT OF PUBLIC  
INSTRUCTION

### ***Connections: Keeping Kids in School***

## **School Effectiveness Survey - STUDENT Version**

### **Instructions for CSG Project Directors**

#### **What does the School Effectiveness Survey-Student Version measure?**

This survey consists of 18 items designed to measure middle and high school students' perceptions of school climate. The instrument was designed by Dee Lindenberger of SAPE (Strategic Alternatives in Prevention Education); in collaboration with Jim O'Neill, MDE Evaluation Consultant for the CSG project, to provide programmatic needs assessment information for schools involved in the CSG project.

#### **Is this survey required as part of the CSG contract?**

The survey is not required, but it is offered by MDE to assist as a *programmatic needs assessment* for the next grant cycle application. In addition, consider these advantages of participating in the survey:

- School climate is a central issue in many districts as part of school/district improvement efforts.
- Results from this survey can be used with those of the student version of the same survey to provide "triangulated" feedback about school climate.
- The report will provide valuable needs assessment information which helps target program efforts as well as secure funding and other support from a variety of sources.
- Data analysis and report generation are provided by MDE at no cost to grant recipients.
- Your individualized report will include benchmarks from aggregated results of all other participating CSG recipients. (Note: Your Individual results will not be identified in reports sent to other grant recipients – they will be combined with results from others to form aggregate benchmarks).
- The same survey will be administered next grant cycle and that report (also provided by MDE) will include year-to-year comparisons.

#### **What is the deadline for completing this survey?**

MDE will provide survey results to all participating CSG recipients by March 2, 2004. In order to provide sufficient time to analyze the data and generate reports, all surveys must be completed by **Friday, February 13, 2004.**

#### **How long does it take to complete the survey?**

The survey should take no more than 15 to 20 minutes to complete.

**Who should complete the survey?**

As mentioned earlier, this survey is not required as part of your CSG project. If you decide to participate, the survey should be completed by students from schools participating in the CSG project. The following grantees should include students from their CSG school site(s):

- Detroit: Crosman Alternative HS
- Detroit: Trombley Alternative HS
- Flint: Whittier MS
- Hazel Park: Breakfast Club and Advantage
- Lake Orion: Lake Orion HS and Alternative Ed
- Pottersville: NEC HS
- South Redford: Thurston HS

For CSG recipients not listed above (e.g., ISDs, large LEAs), there are numerous school sites that could be surveyed. The decision of which schools to include is at the discretion of the CSG recipient. As you decide, consider including schools that have these characteristics:

- The schools vary in some way from each other demographically (e.g., urban vs. rural; high-income vs. low-income; large vs. small schools; high-risk vs. low-risk population)
- The schools have relatively high levels of suspensions and/or expulsions.
- The schools have “buy-in” regarding school improvement and are seeking “school profile” data to inform those efforts.

**How many students at each site should complete the survey?**

To ensure that grantees can be used as reliable benchmarks for each other, all CSG recipients should follow these general guidelines for sampling:

Middle school: Survey grade 6 and 8 only, at least 100 students per grade.

High School: Survey grade 10 and 12 only, at least 100 students per grade.

Alternative School: Survey all students/grades.

The MDE Evaluation Consultant for the CSG project (Jim O'Neill) will be in touch with you sometime during the week of 1/19 to assist with sampling issues, if needed.

**How do students complete the survey?**

Each student will need to use a computer with access to the internet. The survey web site is: <http://home.comcast.net/~joneillphd/MDE-CSG-SchoolEffectiveness-Student.html>. Once accessed online, the survey includes instructions.

To expedite completion of the survey, it can be administered in groups in a location with multiple computers. If you are concerned about the reading comprehension level of your students, the survey can be read aloud by an adult.

**What happens to the survey results? When will they be available to me?**

The results will be tabulated for and reported separately to each CSG recipient by Jim O'Neill, the Evaluation Consultant for the CSG project. The report will include results for the grantee's participating school(s) as well as aggregated benchmark data from other CSG recipients. Please note that individual results from your site will not be identified in reports sent to other grant recipients – they will be combined with results from others to form aggregate benchmarks.

The results will be available on or before the CSG Workshop on March 2, 2004, which will include a session on how to utilize this report for the grant application for next grant cycle.

**Who should I contact if I have questions or concerns?**

Contact Jim O'Neill at: [joneill@madonna.edu](mailto:joneill@madonna.edu)

**Thank You!**

# Connections Effective Schools Survey: Part II

## Quality Leadership

*For Teaching, Counseling/Social Work, and Administrative Staff*

**School Name:** \_\_\_\_\_

**I am:**

\_\_\_\_\_ Administrator

\_\_\_\_\_ Male

\_\_\_\_\_ Teacher

\_\_\_\_\_ Female

\_\_\_\_\_ Counselor/Social Worker

\_\_\_\_\_ Other

### About Quality Leadership

Schools face challenging educational, economic, and social issues. The more effectively school staff members are able to work together as a cohesive team, the more successful they will be in addressing these issues with creativity and resourcefulness—and in providing an optimal learning environment for their students.

Peter Senge (author of The Fifth Discipline and Schools that Learn) conducted extensive research to identify the key characteristics of high functioning organizations. He discovered that the most successful and resilient organizations were those where staff members were able to work together as *learning teams*. These powerful teams had the capacity to overcome obstacles and thrive, even in times of challenging conditions and economic crisis.

*And it is more than simply a kind of group togetherness, like a committee. It is a togetherness that is synergistic, honoring the differences we bring to the table—and the chaos as well—one that enhances us both as individuals and as a co-creative team or group.*

*David Spangler*

Senge discovered that learning teams are characterized by five social technologies that he calls “disciplines.” Each of the disciplines is described below, followed by questions that can help you assess how well your staff functions as a team.

### Instructions for Completing this Survey

Please read each statement and think about which response you feel best describes the way things are in your school. If the behavior described in the statement rarely if ever happens that way, circle number 1 for “Not Typical.” If it happens that way most of the time, circle number 5 for “Very Typical.”

| Not Typical |   | Somewhat Typical |   | Very Typical |
|-------------|---|------------------|---|--------------|
| 1           | 2 | 3                | 4 | 5            |

Developed by:

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In collaboration with:

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SAPE Colleagues (Strategic Alternatives in Prevention Education Association)

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**Team Learning:** *Staff members have the capacity to learn with and from each other. They actively debate and share their ideas, and “listen deeply” to each other’s opinions. Team learning is characterized by collegial relationships and shared leadership.*

---

|   | Not Typical | Somewhat Typical | Very Typical |     |
|---|-------------|------------------|--------------|-----|
| 1. The following is true of our interactions as a staff:  |             |                  |              |     |
| a. Respectful relationships are a priority.   | 1           | 2                | 3            | 4 5 |
| b. People really listen to each other’s ideas in discussions.   | 1           | 2                | 3            | 4 5 |
| c. Irrespective of roles, we work together as a team.   | 1           | 2                | 3            | 4 5 |
| d. Staff members feel their opinions and ideas are valued—even if they’re “out of the box”!   | 1           | 2                | 3            | 4 5 |
| e. Staff use effective conflict resolution skills when they have a disagreement with each other.  | 1           | 2                | 3            | 4 5 |
| f. Staff members have fun together.   | 1           | 2                | 3            | 4 5 |
| 2. Teachers and administrators share leadership roles and responsibilities in their efforts to make our school the best it can be.                        | 1           | 2                | 3            | 4 5 |
| 3. There is a clear process in place for decision-making that includes opportunities for participation and input (where appropriate) by key stakeholders: |             |                  |              |     |
| a. Staff  | 1           | 2                | 3            | 4 5 |
| b. Students   | 1           | 2                | 3            | 4 5 |
| c. Parents  | 1           | 2                | 3            | 4 5 |
| d. Community  | 1           | 2                | 3            | 4 5 |
| 4. Staff are given adequate time to work together on school initiatives and problem-solving.  | 1           | 2                | 3            | 4 5 |
| 5. When staff members attend a training or conference, they share what they learned with the rest of the staff.   | 1           | 2                | 3            | 4 5 |

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**Systems Thinking:** *Staff members engage in the practice of stepping back and looking at the “big picture” of a situation, i.e., its complexities and inter-related dynamics. They try to foresee the long-term impact and the potential for “unintended consequences” that might result from a course of action.*

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|  |   |   |   |   |   |
|--|---|---|---|---|---|
| 6. Our staff utilize “systems thinking” (as described above) when planning new initiatives or addressing problems. | 1 | 2 | 3 | 4 | 5 |
|--|---|---|---|---|---|

|  | Not Typical | Somewhat Typical | Very Typical |   |   |
|--|-------------|------------------|--------------|---|---|
| 7. Our staff are willing to invest in effective long-term solutions rather than quick “fixes” to problems. | 1           | 2                | 3            | 4 | 5 |
| 8. Our staff try to foresee long-term and unintended consequences when planning or solving problems.       | 1           | 2                | 3            | 4 | 5 |

**Mental Models:** *Staff members have the ability to recognize and work with people’s “mental models” i.e., their underlying paradigms or assumptions about “the way things are or should be.” They are willing to suspend their own beliefs and listen to the perspectives of others with an open mind.*

|  | Not Typical | Somewhat Typical | Very Typical |   |   |
|--|-------------|------------------|--------------|---|---|
| 9. Staff actively seek to understand each other’s point of view.                           | 1           | 2                | 3            | 4 | 5 |
| 10. People feel safe to talk about things, including their feelings.                       | 1           | 2                | 3            | 4 | 5 |
| 11. Differences of opinion among our staff generally result in productive problem-solving. | 1           | 2                | 3            | 4 | 5 |

**Shared Vision:** *All staff members have a “shared vision” i.e., they share some core beliefs and underlying assumptions regarding teaching and learning that guide their behavior and decision-making. The beliefs are positive and personally meaningful to each staff member.*

|  | Not Typical | Somewhat Typical | Very Typical |   |   |
|--|-------------|------------------|--------------|---|---|
| 12. How typical of your staff are the following underlying beliefs? ( <i>Note:</i> Before responding to these questions, think about how passionately people hold these beliefs and how they are manifested in your school. Use the space at the end of the survey to add comments.) |             |                  |              |   |   |
| a. All students are capable of learning.   | 1           | 2                | 3            | 4 | 5 |
| b. Respect and caring for students are exhibited in all interactions—including disciplinary interventions.   | 1           | 2                | 3            | 4 | 5 |
| c. Safety and trust among students and teachers are essential to the learning process.   | 1           | 2                | 3            | 4 | 5 |
| d. It’s important that discipline strategies include a “teaching” component to help students learn pro-social behaviors.   | 1           | 2                | 3            | 4 | 5 |
| e. We need to utilize a variety of instructional strategies to meet the needs of students’ different learning styles.  | 1           | 2                | 3            | 4 | 5 |
| f. Learning can be joyful, interesting, and meaningful!  | 1           | 2                | 3            | 4 | 5 |

|  | Not Typical | Somewhat Typical | Very Typical |     |
|--|-------------|------------------|--------------|-----|
| 13. Our school has written policy and procedures that accurately reflect the strategies, services, and programming that are utilized.                  | 1           | 2                | 3            | 4 5 |
| 14. Staff feel a strong <i>moral purpose</i> in their roles as educators and youth advocates—they have a personal commitment and passion for teaching. | 1           | 2                | 3            | 4 5 |
| 15. Staff uphold a common set of behavioral expectations for students by consistently intervening when there are infractions.                          | 1           | 2                | 3            | 4 5 |
| 16. Conversations in the staff lounge are respectful (e.g., no sarcasm, put downs, hurtful gossip, or breaking confidentiality).                       | 1           | 2                | 3            | 4 5 |

**Personal Mastery:** *All staff members are personally committed to a life-style of inquiry and learning, both personally and professionally.*

|  | Not Typical | Somewhat Typical | Very Typical |     |
|--|-------------|------------------|--------------|-----|
| 17. Ongoing staff development/learning is supported.                                 | 1           | 2                | 3            | 4 5 |
| 18. Staff members are enthusiastic about teaching.                                   | 1           | 2                | 3            | 4 5 |
| 19. Staff members actively seek opportunities to enhance their knowledge and skills. | 1           | 2                | 3            | 4 5 |
| 20. Staff contributions and successes are acknowledged and celebrated.               | 1           | 2                | 3            | 4 5 |

21. Please indicate how many hours of professional development you participated in last year:

|                       |                                    |
|-----------------------|------------------------------------|
| _____ 0 days          | _____ 3 - 4 days                   |
| _____ Less than 1 day | _____ 5 - 6 days                   |
| _____ 1 - 2 days      | _____ More than 6 days (How many?) |

In summary, think about how you would describe the overall manner in which your staff members and administration relate and work together as a team.

*The most powerful indicator of student achievement is the quality of relationships among the staff.*  
*Harvard Principal's Center*

22. Circle the letter of the metaphor that most closely describes the way in which your school staff most often tends to work together on projects and school initiatives:
- a. Carousel: *We go round and round with things.*
  - b. Shooting Gallery: *People, rather than problems, get targeted.*
  - c. Swamp Thing: *We get pretty bogged down.*
  - d. Turtle: *Things move along, but progress is pretty slow.*
  - e. Bumper Cars: *Everybody's going, but not in the same direction.*
  - f. Starship: *We set high goals and really take off with our plans. We are capable of finding our way through uncharted territory, solving problems we encounter along the way and bringing back new knowledge.*

Is there anything important that you would like to share about leadership in your school? If yes, please describe briefly:



# Connections Effective Schools Survey: Part I

## School Climate

*For Middle and High School Students and Staff*

**School Name:** \_\_\_\_\_

\_\_\_\_\_ **I am a Student:** \_\_\_\_\_ Grade Level

\_\_\_\_\_ Male

\_\_\_\_\_ Female

\_\_\_\_\_ **I am a School Staff Member:** \_\_\_\_\_ Administrator

\_\_\_\_\_ Male

\_\_\_\_\_ Female

\_\_\_\_\_ Teacher

\_\_\_\_\_ Counselor

\_\_\_\_\_ Support Staff

### About School Climate

“School Climate” refers to how it “feels” to be a student or staff member in the school.

*“Schools with positive climates are places where people care, respect and trust one another; and where the school, as an institution, cares for, respects, and trusts people. In such a school, people feel a high sense of pride and ownership that comes from each individual having a role in making the school a better place.”*

*Eugene Howard*

Everyone has a number of *basic human needs*. These are needs that we are biologically hard-wired to fulfill. The more effectively a school can provide a climate that will help its students meet those needs in a positive way, the more it can help its students be successful, both academically and in their lives. The questions in this survey are grouped according to the basic need areas identified by Karen Pittman (Executive Director of the Forum for Youth Investment) in her research on positive youth development.

This survey gives you an opportunity to express your opinions about some aspects of the “climate” in your school. This survey includes a number of statements that will provide valuable information for future planning. Your responses are confidential. The results of this survey will be compiled into group responses, with no way to identify an individual’s responses. The surveys are numbered to help us with data tracking. No connection will be made or attempted between your responses and your identity. We will protect your confidentiality.

### Instructions for Completing this Survey

Please read each statement and think about which response you feel best describes the way things are in your school. If the behavior described in the statement rarely if ever happens that way, circle number “1” for “Not Typical.” If it happens that way most of the time, circle number “5” for “Very Typical.”

|             |   |                  |   |              |
|-------------|---|------------------|---|--------------|
| Not Typical |   | Somewhat Typical |   | Very Typical |
| 1           | 2 | 3                | 4 | 5            |

Developed by:

In collaboration with:

Dee Lindenberger: SAPE Consultant, Marquette-Alger RESA

Paul White: Director of Academic Resource Center, Lakeland College, Wisconsin

Jim O’Neill: Evaluation Consultant, O’Neill Consulting/ Madonna University

SAPE Colleagues (Strategic Alternatives in Prevention Education Association)

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**Safety and Structure:** *Youth need to have a sense of personal safety and protection—both physically and emotionally.*

---

|   | Not Typical | Somewhat Typical | Very Typical |     |
|---|-------------|------------------|--------------|-----|
| 1. The overall school atmosphere feels:   |             |                  |              |     |
| a) Safe   | 1           | 2                | 3            | 4 5 |
| b) Caring   | 1           | 2                | 3            | 4 5 |
| 2. When school staff have a conflict or behavioral problem with a student, they are:                                    |             |                  |              |     |
| a) Calm   | 1           | 2                | 3            | 4 5 |
| b) Respectful   | 1           | 2                | 3            | 4 5 |
| 3. Students resolve their disputes:   |             |                  |              |     |
| a) Respectfully   | 1           | 2                | 3            | 4 5 |
| b) Peacefully   | 1           | 2                | 3            | 4 5 |
| 4. School staff use discipline strategies that promote positive change when there is a behavior problem with a student. | 1           | 2                | 3            | 4 5 |
| 5. The present discipline system seems fair (not too harsh or too lenient).   | 1           | 2                | 3            | 4 5 |
| 6. Standards for student behavior are clearly communicated to:  |             |                  |              |     |
| a) Students   | 1           | 2                | 3            | 4 5 |
| b) Parents  | 1           | 2                | 3            | 4 5 |
| c) Staff  | 1           | 2                | 3            | 4 5 |
| 7. When the disciplinary code is violated, consequences are enforced consistently for all students.                     | 1           | 2                | 3            | 4 5 |
| 8. School staff members help students take responsibility for their behavior.   | 1           | 2                | 3            | 4 5 |
| 9. Adults help make sure that students don't get bullied or harassed.   | 1           | 2                | 3            | 4 5 |
| 10. Students having problems in the following areas are quickly given support services:                                 |             |                  |              |     |
| a) Academic problems  | 1           | 2                | 3            | 4 5 |
| b) Emotional or behavioral problems<br>(for example, chemical use, aggression,<br>depression, stress)                   | 1           | 2                | 3            | 4 5 |

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**Belonging and Group Membership:** *Youth need to feel they are valued members of a group; they have a sense of belonging in the school.*

---

|   | Not Typical | Somewhat Typical | Very Typical |     |
|---|-------------|------------------|--------------|-----|
| 11. Student concerns are taken seriously by school staff.   | 1           | 2                | 3            | 4 5 |
| 12. School is a place where students feel they fit in and “belong.”   | 1           | 2                | 3            | 4 5 |
| 13. There are opportunities for all students who want to participate in extra-curricular/leadership activities. | 1           | 2                | 3            | 4 5 |

**Self-Worth and Ability to Contribute:** *Youth need to have a sense of their worth and have opportunities to make meaningful contributions—with their peers, adults, and in their school.*

---

|   | Not Typical | Somewhat Typical | Very Typical |   |   |
|---|-------------|------------------|--------------|---|---|
| 14. Staff believe all students can be successful in school.   | 1           | 2                | 3            | 4 | 5 |
| 15. Students are acknowledged for their success and contributions in many different arenas (for example, academic, service/helping, leadership, talent).  | 1           | 2                | 3            | 4 | 5 |
| 16. School staff listen to student ideas and suggestions.   | 1           | 2                | 3            | 4 | 5 |
| 17. Students have opportunities to help others (for example, mentoring, tutoring, community service, peer helping, service learning, mediation) in their: |             |                  |              |   |   |
| a) School   | 1           | 2                | 3            | 4 | 5 |
| b) Community  | 1           | 2                | 3            | 4 | 5 |

**Independence and Control:** *Youth need to feel they can make some decisions and have some control over their lives.*

---

|   | Not Typical | Somewhat Typical | Very Typical |   |   |
|---|-------------|------------------|--------------|---|---|
| 18. Students participate in making school an inviting place to be (for example, planning displays, painting murals, contributing art work, planting gardens).                   | 1           | 2                | 3            | 4 | 5 |
| 19. Students are given choices regarding learning activities (for example, choice of topic or choice between writing a paper and doing a project, working alone or in a group). | 1           | 2                | 3            | 4 | 5 |
| 20. Students have opportunities to participate in decisions about school issues that affect them (for example, discipline policy, extra-curricular activities, leadership).     | 1           | 2                | 3            | 4 | 5 |

---

**Closeness and Good Relationships:** *Youth need to experience closeness to other people—relationships that are based upon respect, caring, honesty, and trust.*

---

|  | Not Typical |   | Somewhat Typical |   | Very Typical |
|--|-------------|---|------------------|---|--------------|
| 21. All students are treated with <i>respect</i> by:   |             |   |                  |   |              |
| a) Peers   | 1           | 2 | 3                | 4 | 5            |
| b) Staff   | 1           | 2 | 3                | 4 | 5            |
| 22. School staff encourage respect for diversity of all kinds.   | 1           | 2 | 3                | 4 | 5            |
| 23. Students and staff spend time together outside of academic time in the classrooms (for example, informal activities or conversations, extra-curricular activities).                    | 1           | 2 | 3                | 4 | 5            |
| 24. Students and staff enjoy each other's company.   | 1           | 2 | 3                | 4 | 5            |
| 25. Every student has at least one adult in school with whom he /she has a "special connection"—a person that student would feel comfortable talking to about problems or asking for help. | 1           | 2 | 3                | 4 | 5            |

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**Competency and Mastery:** *Youth need to develop attitudes, behaviors, and skills in a number of core areas in order to be successful as adults (including social and coping skills as well as academic abilities).*

---

|  | Not Typical |   | Somewhat Typical |   | Very Typical |
|--|-------------|---|------------------|---|--------------|
| 26. Students are taught and encouraged to use effective social, conflict resolution, and coping skills including:  |             |   |                  |   |              |
| a) Respecting diversity (race, culture, gender, sexual orientation, religion, special needs)   | 1           | 2 | 3                | 4 | 5            |
| b) Behaving according to a core set of ethics (character education)  | 1           | 2 | 3                | 4 | 5            |
| c) Managing anger  | 1           | 2 | 3                | 4 | 5            |
| d) Communicating effectively   | 1           | 2 | 3                | 4 | 5            |
| e) Managing stress   | 1           | 2 | 3                | 4 | 5            |
| f) Solving personal problems   | 1           | 2 | 3                | 4 | 5            |
| g) Resolving conflicts with others   | 1           | 2 | 3                | 4 | 5            |
| 27. Because teachers know that students learn in different ways, they use lots of different strategies (including active student participation) when they teach that help make learning interesting and fun. | 1           | 2 | 3                | 4 | 5            |
| 28. Teachers and administrators show that they have high expectations that <i>all</i> students can be successful learners by the way they talk and act with students.  | 1           | 2 | 3                | 4 | 5            |

Not Typical    Somewhat Typical    Very Typical

29. When students are having trouble with a subject, staff are quick to find a way to help them (for example, spending extra time with them, arranging for tutoring, etc.).

1                      2                      3                      4                      5

**Conclusion:** Please respond to the following open ended questions.

30. Please look back over the questions in this survey and select up to five that you feel need the most improvement in your school. Record the number of each question below and write any comments you have about your choices in the space below:

\_\_\_\_\_

31. Did we miss something you feel is important that would help improve your school's climate?

32. Is there something especially positive about your school climate you would like to note?

33. Is there anything that has recently happened in your school or community that might be affecting your responses in this survey regarding school climate (for example, a death or other traumatic event, cuts in programs or services, contract changes in school staff)? If yes, please explain.

*If you are a student, please respond to the following final questions.*

34. Which best describes your current status regarding school suspension?

\_\_\_\_\_ I have never been suspended at this school.  
 \_\_\_\_\_ I have been suspended at this school, but not currently.  
 \_\_\_\_\_ I am currently serving an in-school suspension.  
 \_\_\_\_\_ I am currently serving a suspension at another school location.

35. Which best describes your current status regarding school expulsion?

\_\_\_\_\_ I have never been expelled from school.  
 \_\_\_\_\_ I have been expelled from school, but not currently.  
 \_\_\_\_\_ I am currently expelled and attending a program at another school.

# Connections Effective Schools Survey: Part III

## Effective Instruction

### *For Teaching Staff*

**School Name:** \_\_\_\_\_

**I am:**

\_\_\_\_\_ Male

\_\_\_\_\_ Female

#### **About Effective Instruction:**

Much has been learned in the past ten years about effective pedagogy and the neuroscience of learning. Through recent technology and research we have a clearer picture of how the brain takes in, encodes, and retrieves information—about things that impede learning and things that stimulate learning. Neuroscience-based learning (i.e., brain-based learning or accelerated learning) is a body of research that can help educators create learning environments that match how our body and brain learn, most naturally. Irrespective of subject matter taught, the use of these effective instructional strategies can help us work *with* the grain of our students' biology instead of *against* it, thus increasing learning while minimizing the behavioral problems that accompany disconnected learners.

Increasing numbers of educators are being trained in brain-based teaching strategies and are discovering their powerful impact as educational tools. There are also educators who have intuitively been drawn to that style of teaching, and have been using these strategies for years. The following questions are intended to help you assess *your* level of use of these research-based strategies that can increase bonding to school, improve behavior, and enhance learning across content areas.

#### **Instructions for Completing this Survey**

Please read each statement and think about which response you feel best describes the way you do things in *your classroom*. If the behavior described in the statement rarely if ever happens that way, circle number 1 for “Not Typical.” If it happens that way most of the time, circle number 5 for “Very Typical.”

| Not Typical |   | Somewhat Typical |   | Very Typical |
|-------------|---|------------------|---|--------------|
| 1           | 2 | 3                | 4 | 5            |

Developed by:

In collaboration with:

Dee Lindenberger: SAPE Consultant, Marquette-Alger RESA

Cristal McGill: Impact Teaching, Inc., Consultant/Trainer

Jim O'Neill: Evaluation Consultant, O'Neill Consulting/ Madonna University

SAPE Colleagues (Strategic Alternatives in Prevention Education Association)

|   | Not Typical | Somewhat Typical | Very Typical |   |   |
|---|-------------|------------------|--------------|---|---|
| 1. How typical is the use of the following strategies in your classroom?  |             |                  |              |   |   |
| a. Music (i.e., use of music as a classroom management tool and to regulate student affect)   | 1           | 2                | 3            | 4 | 5 |
| b. Movement (i.e., kinesthetic activities and other opportunities to stand up and move around)  | 1           | 2                | 3            | 4 | 5 |
| c. Projects with real life relevance  | 1           | 2                | 3            | 4 | 5 |
| d. Experiential activities / simulations  | 1           | 2                | 3            | 4 | 5 |
| e. Role plays or dramatizations   | 1           | 2                | 3            | 4 | 5 |
| f. Small group discussions among students   | 1           | 2                | 3            | 4 | 5 |
| g. Cooperative learning opportunities (i.e., positive inter-dependent group learning assignments that include interpersonal/group skills and have a sense of individual and group accountability—“sink or swim together”) | 1           | 2                | 3            | 4 | 5 |
| h. Graphic representations (i.e., having students mentally organize and “manipulate” content into mind maps, drawings, physical models, webs, or charts, kinesthetic representations)                                     | 1           | 2                | 3            | 4 | 5 |
| i. Art (i.e., activities to stimulate expression and enhance memory)  | 1           | 2                | 3            | 4 | 5 |
| j. Stories and metaphors  | 1           | 2                | 3            | 4 | 5 |
| k. Reciprocal teaching (i.e., peer-to-peer presentations or interactions to check for understanding and solidify learning)  | 1           | 2                | 3            | 4 | 5 |
| l. Social interactions (i.e., participating in mutually enjoyable activities that build relationships and a sense of community)   | 1           | 2                | 3            | 4 | 5 |
| 2. Students are encouraged to make mental comparisons by asking them to identify similarities and differences with content.   | 1           | 2                | 3            | 4 | 5 |
| 3. The purpose of learning specific content is clearly conveyed to students in order to create “buy in.”  | 1           | 2                | 3            | 4 | 5 |
| 4. Instructional feedback to students is “corrective” rather than “punitive” in spirit.   | 1           | 2                | 3            | 4 | 5 |
| 5. Students are given opportunities to give their own feedback.   | 1           | 2                | 3            | 4 | 5 |
| 6. Problem solving activities and situations are used where students are given opportunities to explain their hypothesis and conclusions.   | 1           | 2                | 3            | 4 | 5 |



|   | Not Typical | Somewhat Typical | Very Typical |                                    |
|---|-------------|------------------|--------------|------------------------------------|
| 7. “Higher level” questions are utilized to deepen student learning (i.e., questions that promote critical thinking, such as asking students to analyze errors or perspectives).  | 1           | 2                | 3            | 4 5                                |
| 8. Advance organizers are used to provide a “pre-exposure” to new content and to focus attention on key points.   | 1           | 2                | 3            | 4 5                                |
| 9. Students are given opportunities to respond to questions designed to stimulate reflection and deepen learning following experiential activities (e.g. simulations, role plays, service activities in and outside of the school). | 1           | 2                | 3            | 4 5                                |
| 10. Unstructured time (before, after, and in between classes) is used as an opportunity to make positive connections with students (e.g., welcoming them, greeting them by name, or otherwise showing an interest in them).         | 1           | 2                | 3            | 4 5                                |
| 11. Please indicate how many days of professional development regarding effective instructional strategies you participated in last year:   |             |                  |              |                                    |
| _____ 0 days  |             |                  |              | _____ 3 - 4 days                   |
| _____ Less than 1 day   |             |                  |              | _____ 5 - 6 days                   |
| _____ 1 - 2 days  |             |                  |              | _____ More than 6 days (How many?) |

Comments: